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THE CHRIST : : OF THE SOLDIER

Essays chiefly by
Wesleyan Methodist
ex-Chaplains

Edited by

F. L. WISEMAN, B.A.

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Indexed

The Christ of the Soldier

Theology

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Methodist ex-Chaplains

EDITED BY
F. L. WISEMAN, B.A.

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PREFACE

OF making books on the moral of the Great War there seems to be no end, but no apology is offered for the publication of the present volume. Seeing that so many chaplains have taken in hand to set down their thoughts on the situation, it seems almost necessary that Wesleyan chaplains also who have had long and intimate experience of religious work in Navy and Army should make their contribution to the discussion.

Perusal of volumes already published leads to the conclusion that, however sincerely one may try to preserve an open mind and an unbiased judgement, it is impossible altogether to escape the influence of previous environment and experience. What one takes away depends, in part at least, upon what one brings. The case will hardly be fully presented until we have the benefit of the light which Wesleyan chaplains can throw. The experience and opinions of some of them this little volume presents.

The writers have enjoyed exceptional opportunities of studying the problem at first hand. Some have served as chaplains in the Army for many years before the war ; some, before receiving commissions as chaplains, served in the ranks ; one approaches the subject from the layman's standpoint.

For upwards of fifty years Wesleyan Methodism has endeavoured to care for the religious and social welfare of the soldier. It entered into the labours of those who, in earlier years, had struggled and suffered for religious liberty, and secured for the soldier the right of religious self-determination which had already been accorded to the civilian. In most of the garrison towns it provided for his leisure hours the comforts and fellowship of Soldiers' Homes. Though declining commissions, it set apart ministers to care for the soldiers of its communion, and, when desired, for any belonging to other Free Churches also. Finding in these ministers his friends, the soldier admitted them to an intimacy rarely accorded to one regarded as an officer.

Thus when war broke out our Church was able to put at the service of the country ministers who had known the soldier in both the monotony of garrison life at home and the enervating climate and moral perils of the East, and who had shared with him the hardships and dangers of the campaign ; who knew him and, loved him, and in return, had gained his confidence and even his affection.

It has been said that as the New Army was quite different from the old, being not a separate caste but merely so many civilians constrained by conviction or circumstance to put on khaki, experience of the soldier gained under the former conditions was of little value in the new time. But the statement is only partially true. As every scout-master, for example, knows, a troop of boy scouts is not merely so many boys in billycock and blouse. If any one

be a boy scout there is a new creation ; old things pass away, and with the new standpoint and ethos all things become new. How much more when one enters an organization like the British Army, with its special purpose, its spirit, its tradition, its discipline ! Even if one desired to do so, one could not altogether escape the infection of the new environment. It was, therefore, of great advantage that we already had men who knew the soldier's life, the temper it induces, and the perils to which it is exposed ; who, further, could give the benefit of their experience to the great number of chaplains required by the enlistment of hundreds of thousands of Wesleyans.

But, in so far as the New Army retained its civilian mind and heart, our chaplains are equally familiar with it. The Wesleyan Church has intimate knowledge of the class whence the bulk of the recruits were necessarily drawn. The new chaplains had been associated with them in their civil life. Though for the time holding commissioned rank, they remained one in heart and sympathy, and so far as possible in comradeship, with the men to whom they ministered. It is not simply, therefore, that they had special opportunities of finding out the mind of the soldier, but that they could bring to it an understanding, experience, and sympathy peculiarly fitted for its interpretation.

Nevertheless the writers of this volume claim no authority for their conclusions other than that of the truth they contain. They do not profess to speak for any but themselves. There is little doubt,

however, that they represent the mind of a great number.

The aim of the book throughout is practical. How can the Churches benefit from the unique experience of the time of war? What suggestions affecting the preaching of the Cross and the life of the Churches can be made? How can the Church best welcome the soldier on his demobilization, and secure his continued adhesion and service?

The essays have been written independently. No attempt has been made to fetter the expression of opinion. But, to ensure the covering of the ground, a plan of the book was prepared, in accordance with which each writer has contributed his chapter. Some overlapping is unavoidable, for which the indulgence of the reader is asked. Many of the chapters were written in the spring of this year. My own share is but small, and for what editorial work and oversight the volume has received I must express my gratitude to my friend, the Rev. W. F. Lofthouse, M.A., now happily restored to his position on the staff at Handsworth College.

F. L. WISEMAN.

FOREWORD

As a chaplain returning to England after five years of war, I have been struck by the fact that the Church is growing restive under what it regards as the school-master attitude of the ministers who have served as chaplains. Who are these young men who think that they have received a new revelation from God, who are so eager to publish abroad the soldiers' criticisms of the Church, and who so dogmatically state what is wrong with organized Christianity? I am bound to say that I have a great deal of sympathy with this resentment, and the knowledge that it is so widespread makes me somewhat diffident. Doubtless some chaplains have not been wise in their criticisms. Under the blinding light of what was to them a new discovery they have thought that the whole of wisdom was theirs. But still the chaplain has a contribution to make which is of value in the present time, and that is the excuse for this volume.

The chaplain's opportunities during the war have been manifold, and perhaps one of the most important has been that the minister has, for the first time in most cases, been brought into close contact with that vast majority of the population which is outside the Churches. In the officers' mess he has lived with men who since they left school have never darkened a church door, whose Sundays are spent playing golf and motoring, and whose creed, if they have any,

is very largely pagan. In the ranks he has met men of the same type, and also the working men who have grown to think that religion is a hobby of the middle classes, and has little or no bearing upon practical life, especially such lives as they have to live. It has meant that for the first time in his life the minister has met on equal terms the man in the street, has seen his point of view, has looked at the Church with his eyes. Hitherto he has seen it from the inside ; now he views it from the outside, and the difference has staggered him.

Then, too, he has been astounded at the natural virtues of both officers and men, the sacrifice, unselfishness, comradeship, and heroism. Suddenly plucked out of the narrow parochialism in which he has hitherto lived, the freer air and wider vision have almost made him think that this is better than the Church ; here he is nearer to the true heart of God. He has been overwhelmed with the desire that these who are outside may, with all their splendid qualities, be won and used by the Church of Christ.

At first he regards these men as soldiers. It is the Army which has moulded and made them ; it is the Army, as opposed to civil life, which is responsible for this new atmosphere he breathes. Then he discovers that this is not so. The old Army, which some of us knew and loved before the war, is no more. Most of it lies sleeping in Flanders ; it gave itself for the saving of England whilst the New Army was being trained. These young men with whom the chaplain now lives are the boys of the homes he used to visit, and who too often took such particular care

that the parson never met them. Some of them were the professional and business men with whom, at most, he was but on nodding terms, and who, if they met him at all, did so watchfully, never frankly, refusing to let him get near to them, declining to accept him as a man to be met on equal terms—he was a parson. Some were mechanics, craftsmen, labourers, who had never had any dealings with Christianity, regarded it with suspicion, rather thought that it was part of a capitalist plot against them. As children some few had gone to Sunday school, but since that time religion had had no interest for them. All these the Church had failed to reach. Why? The chaplain found that they were not hard to reach; their response was immediate and generous. There was no revival in the old sense of the word, and yet the movings of the spiritual tides were very manifest; the amount of true religion revealed was astonishing. Their creed was not complete; there were extraordinary gaps in it—they had much to learn; but what they had they held with a conviction that was immovable, and it proved a good creed to die by. Then what was wrong with the Church that so much of the best of the nation passed it by, viewing it either with absolute indifference or with grave suspicion? In trying to answer these questions, and in attempting to explain the secret which some have discovered, the secret of reaching and moving the hearts of these men who for so long have been uninfluenced by organized Christianity, the chaplain has given rise to misunderstanding. In the surprise of the discovery that there is so much real religion

outside the fold of the Church, he has sometimes given the impression that he no longer regards the fold as having any use or purpose, or, at any rate, that a new fold must be built to his pattern. As a matter of fact his discovery is not new. The disciples were taught it in the very dawn of Christianity, when our Lord reminded them that 'other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' The war has emphasized a fact which the Church has always been apt to overlook, namely, that deep, hidden, silent, and yet unceasingly, the river of goodness flows on eternally in the hearts of men, and the number of those who have builded an altar to 'the unknown God' and daily offered sacrifice thereon is beyond all human calculation. To many of these worshippers the war has revealed that the name of that God is Jesus Christ, but not to all has this knowledge come.

We do not claim that the returning soldier is going to teach the Church what to believe or how to worship. He does not bring back from the front a new religion. True, he has something to teach, but he has more to learn. Our endeavour is, from the experience gained during a war in which he has let us see his heart and read his mind, to make suggestions which may help our brethren who have not had the same opportunity to reach and hold for Christ all that is left of the noblest of our nation's young manhood.

These men have passed through tremendous experiences. Whilst in the trenches few of them were normal. Death was always near; things spiritual seemed more real. Young men dreamed dreams and saw visions. To most the experience was

inarticulate, and charged with emotion. For a moment they saw God, and knew Him ; but the vision faded, and the natural tendency is for them to drift back into a life wherein these things are nothing more than a memory. It is our task so to guide and help them that their experiences may become crystallized into a living faith ; we must interpret for them the meaning of that which they have passed through. They bear in them the marks of the Lord Jesus. Dr. John Kelman tells of a soldier killed in a thunderstorm at Abbeville : ' Near the tent where he lay was an iron crucifix with decorative tracery, and on the boy's breast they found an exact impression of it. That boy is, in a sense, symbolic of them all.' Most chaplains will bear testimony that whatever the troops might think of or say about the Church or Christians, for Christ they had nothing but reverence, admiration, even love. They knew the meaning of sacrifice ; they understood for the first time, in the light of their own experience, one of the great meanings of the Cross of Christ, and had learned themselves to die daily.

The task of dealing with these matters in detail is not mine. In the succeeding pages others attempt to put into words something of the knowledge which has come to all who have striven to help and guide these men in the hour of their need. All the chaplains who write have known and seen ; all have been greatly used of God amongst their comrades. In all humility they make a contribution which they pray may be of use to others in the great task of gathering into the one fold these sheep for whom Christ died.

The Christ of the Soldier

I

THE GOSPEL AND THE WAR

THE LESSONS OF THE WAR.

Now that we are breathing again after the actual anxieties and fears of the war are over, we begin to forget its searching experiences and questions. Suddenly faced with a new set of problems, we turn from the war with a mingled sense of foreboding and relief.

To do this, however, is to incur a fatal danger. The war taught us few lessons. If it had lessons to teach, we were too preoccupied to learn them. But it did much to reveal us to ourselves. It called upon us to take stock of our intellectual and spiritual holdings. And if we neglect the challenge now that its existence has passed, we cannot hope to meet the new challenge which the future is already making.

HAS THE WAR DISCREDITED CHRISTIANITY?

When the victories of the Babylonian Kaiser, Nebuchadnezzar, plunged the Jews into exile, men said among the heathen, 'Where is now your God?' When the outbreak of war in 1914 plunged the civilized

world into internecine conflict and fury, men said everywhere, 'Where is now your gospel?' 'Twenty centuries of the preaching of love, and look at this orgy of hate!' 'You have talked of a crucified Redeemer; and, as your own apostle put it, you are crucifying Him afresh on every battlefield in Europe.' 'The battered crucifix, the broken statue—that shows what the gospel is worth to the world and to you.'

As in many another popular cry, there is a great deal of loose thinking here. The disingenuous intrigues of diplomacy and the wholesale butchery of the war no more disprove the gospel than did the falsehood of Ananias or the martyrdom of Stephen.

MISTAKEN VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY.

None the less, the war has undoubtedly discredited certain views and interpretations of the gospel. The gospel has suffered much in the house of its friends. The thrilling message that the Kingdom of Heaven is actually here, and that by loving confidence in Christ a man can scale the heights of unselfishness and find deliverance from everything he needs to fear, has been forgotten. Instead, we have preached, 'Believe that Christ died, and you will be saved from hell'; 'Only have faith, and there is nothing that you need to do'; 'If you do not believe in Christ's atoning death, you are a lost soul.'

To some readers of this book these sentences may seem expositions of the gospel; to others, sheer perversions. The war has demonstrated their hollowness. Professions of belief in Christ, as the Divine

Redeemer of mankind, have not saved the world from the worst horrors and the blackest sins. A faith which holds that all has been done by Christ, and that there is nothing for man to do, has proved ludicrously out of place in these days of call for every kind of active service. And it has been notorious that some of the least orthodox have made the most ardent and unselfish sacrifice of time and of life.

HAS THE WAR DISCREDITED THE CHURCH?

Again, the war, it was often said, has shown the utter bankruptcy of the Church. In the majority of the belligerent Powers the Church has claimed large influence and high prestige. But when events were hurrying us into war the Churches proved to be helpless, and when the nations were flinging themselves upon each other the Churches could only echo the cries of animosity and strife.

This is undoubtedly true of the Churches in the different countries of Europe. They were in a position to do nothing else. And if by a 'Church' we mean a society of men professing a common religious creed, but otherwise mainly engrossed, like the bulk of mankind around them, in money-making and 'getting on,' underselling and over-reaching and exploiting one another, the charge against it cannot be refuted. As an organized and international institution, the Church did as little as that other international institution, Labour, to save the world from the tragedy of war.

But we must beware of being enslaved by words.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ?

The gospel is the good news that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The first message of Christ was that men should change their minds and believe this. What that 'Kingdom' means can be seen in Christ's own life. He made it clear that the Kingdom stands for the unselfish service of others—the King can only be served through the service of His subjects, His brothers. This service must be rendered with purity of body and childlikeness of mind, the subjects of the Kingdom being joined in the closest comradeship with one another and their Master, and a joyous and triumphant confidence in the heavenly Father.

The 'good news' brought by Christ, and to be carried on by His disciples, is that through Christ all this is made possible for us : confidence in God as our heavenly Father, an abiding assurance of Christ's presence with us and in us, the constant impulse to disinterested and loving service to our fellow men, whom we learn to think of as He thought of them, and the vital effectiveness and power produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. With this comes the consciousness of deliverance from sin, especially from those moods and actions that Christ was accustomed to emphasize as sinful : anxiety, selfishness, pride, censoriousness, lustfulness, and greed. The result is a joyous sense of the favour and companionship of Christ, and of freedom from the tyranny of fear and ignorance, desire and weakness. The follower of Christ is 'born again,' or 'born from above.'

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church¹ is nothing but the company of men and women of whom this description is true: who share the life-giving power of the Spirit, and are united with one another in their devotion to Christ and their experience of the deliverance which He accomplishes in their lives. It is, of course, possible for a number of such men and women to band themselves into an actual society or organization; but in its larger and deeper sense the Church will always be a 'mystical' body, living from generation to generation, and, in a manner partly illustrated by a regiment, a public school, or a nation, inspiring and crowning the individual with the accumulated tradition, devotion, and achievement of an invisible multitude.

A later chapter will point out how significantly certain elements in this portraiture, both of the Christian and of the Church, have been reproduced in the soldier and the Army during the war. The Army at its best has proved itself a mystical fellowship, which has faced the nameless and bestial horrors of war with the courage born of a common loyalty to a splendid cause and the resultant sense of emancipation from the pettiness of a life of self-seeking and anxiety.²

WHAT THE WAR HAS DISCREDITED.

For our present purpose it is enough to point out that Christianity and the Church, as commonly

¹ *ἐκκλησία* in Greek political language meant the assembly of the citizens of a town-state who obeyed the same laws, enjoyed the same rights, and recognized a common task of deliberation and action.

² Cf. Rupert Brooke's sonnet, 'Now God be thanked who has joined us to His hour.'

exhibited to the world, and criticized by the world, are things entirely different from anything contemplated by Christ. The war has proved the futility of a religion that teaches 'You have nothing to do except to save your soul, which you can do by believing that Christ died for you,' or 'Make your communion, and all will be well.' In doing so, it has rendered a signal service to Christianity; it has removed a most dangerous misinterpretation that had exalted itself into a rival. The war has exposed the helplessness of our organized Churches, established and unestablished, as societies simply bent on maintaining themselves, and afraid, above all things, of losing their own life or influence. It has thus cleared the way, as few events have ever done, for the Church of Christ.

Christianity, indeed, as we have just considered it, is the one thing which the war has not shown to have broken down. Most of us are familiar with the remark, 'Christianity has not been tried, and failed; it has never been tried.' This is hardly true. It has been tried; and wherever it has been tried it has succeeded.

What has failed is the misinterpretation—we might say the parody—of Christianity. A religion which tolerates pride and meanness, Pharisaism and worry, the laying up of treasure on earth and the constant struggle for money and pleasure, has for nearly nineteen centuries masqueraded as Christianity; and in the furnace of the twentieth its nakedness has been discovered. It has been equally powerless to extinguish hatred and to shame rapacity.

It is the same with the Church. A Church which

has revered wealth and patronized poverty, which has tolerated the vilest conditions and the most impure temptations in the societies which it professes to leaven, has at last been 'shown up.' It could neither check the intrigues of politicians, assuage the passions of the masses, nor show a way of peace to nations tortured and exhausted by the dragging miseries of the war.

WHAT THE WAR HAS ESTABLISHED.

On the other hand, the war has pointed quite clearly to the means of deliverance from the horrors it has fastened on the world. The resolve of men, joined together in a genuine brotherhood to stop short of no sacrifice to attain the end laid down for them by duty, has lit up the most sordid and horrible pages of history with unearthly beauty; and the conviction that justice must be gained, not for one group of nations, but for all, and that self-seeking claims and demands must be subordinated to a common and world-embracing good, has proved itself the only hope for the peace of the future. Let all this be crowned by recognizing it as the will of the Divine Father of men, and to be attained through Christ dwelling and acting in us His brothers, and we are back at religion as we find it in the Gospels. It is the only thing that can save us.

But are we prepared to learn the lesson? Are we prepared to 'scrap' the old conceptions of religion of the Church as so much antiquated armament whose use in modern warfare has become positively dangerous? Unless we are, the consequences will

be disastrous. To tie ourselves to a religion which puts up with all that Christ most vigorously protested against is to be condemned at the last and to be cast with it into the outer darkness. To identify our Churches complacently with that Church against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail is to make a mistake which will doom those Churches to a fate worse than that of Laodicea.

DECREASES IN MEMBERSHIP BEFORE THE WAR.

Even before the war this was being forced upon our unwilling attention. Most of us, indeed, in the religious world were really living in a fool's paradise. We knew that the stated membership of all the Churches was steadily decreasing, that Sunday schools were less and less well attended, that in all parts of the country there were complaints about diminishing congregations. Sunday observance was increasingly neglected. All the signs pointed to diminishing influence in the Churches.

Means were found, however, to discount all these sinister indications. The Churches comforted themselves with the reflection that they were doing as well as could be expected in the distracting rush of modern life. Cases of undoubted numerical success were dwelt upon, and decaying and moribund Churches were thought of as inevitable or negligible. Few religious observers took to heart the immense outnumbering of professed Christians by the multitudes who neglected church services altogether, or suspected the growth of a new and vigorous paganism, quite untouched by Christian standards, in our very midst.

RARITY OF EARNEST CHRISTIANS IN THE ARMY.

Then came the war, and forced us to see facts to which we had more or less successfully made ourselves blind. Lads who enlisted from our Churches found themselves the only Christians in their huts or barrack-rooms. The majority of men only used the name of Christ in blasphemy. Christian self-control with regard to drink and sexual indulgence was looked upon by all ranks in the Army as an impossible attainment or an absurd ideal. We collected the whole manhood of the nation into the Army, only to discover that those who had any vital connexion with the Churches formed a distressingly small minority, variously estimated at fifteen or even ten per cent. A considerable number of men, indeed, had passed through our Sunday schools, and they had not, happily, been able to forget all that they had learnt there ; but we were compelled to recognize that only in a few instances had the school been the entrance-hall to the Church. They could value unselfishness, endurance, comradeship, and gaiety of spirit ; for religion, as presented to them by the Churches, they had neither admiration nor interest.

What was true of huts and barrack-rooms proved equally true of officers' messes. Paganism was there, we were told, often more frank and even unabashed. Chaplains were constantly given to understand that their work and their requirements could always be put on one side or entirely dispensed with. The mere fact that every soldier had to be labelled with a religious badge of some sort, and on certain occasions marched

to an official and a very formal parade service, seemed only to emphasize the more the unreality of religion in the Army. What wonder that many of the most serious-minded and positively religious men in the Army spoke and thought of the Churches only to criticize them?

To recognize all this is not to put down the whole of army life as irreligious. Everyone who has had anything to do with the Army has been amazed and humbled at the magnificent instances of religious sincerity and courage he has met. And army life has done much to strengthen and deepen the religious convictions which men have brought with them on enlistment. 'He that hath, to him shall be given.'

These instances, in an army the size of our Army in the fourth year of the war, can be numbered by the thousand. But the fact remains that they are exceptional. This is proved by the very impression that they make upon us; there is gratification, and almost surprise, when we come upon cases of genuine discipleship of Christ among the troops. We have almost unconsciously reconciled ourselves to expecting sincere Christians to be few and far between. We acquiesce in it. And such acquiescence is fatal.

THE ARMY AND THE NATION.

In these days what is true of the Army is true of the nation. The Army represents the nation as it has never done before. There has been no previous opportunity of studying the feeling of the manhood of the nation as we have been able to study it in camp and trench or dépôt in these years of war. The result is

indeed disquieting. We have to deal with a nation the greater part of which is touched only on the surface, or not touched at all, by the Christianity it still professes to believe.

THE 'FAILURE' OF RELIGION.

If this is so, what has hitherto passed for Christianity has indeed failed. It may well be that, however powerful Christianity had been in this country, our statesmen could not have averted the war that broke out in August, 1914. The proof of its failure is not the outbreak of war. It is the lamentably narrow scope of its influence in the course of the war.

This failure could be described in still more serious language if we turned to the internal life of the country during the war: the profiteering, the extravagance, the callousness which made us endure the hideous sufferings of others when our own wages and profits were leaping up, and the mass of selfishness, in comparison with which the instances of disinterested service and devotion seemed as rare as were the convinced Christians in the Army.

ATTRACTING OUTSIDERS.

But all this lies outside the scope of this book. We are dealing here simply with the light cast on the religion of the country by the Army. And this light is enough to cause grave apprehension to the most optimistic. On all sides we are assured that the Church must rouse itself, and redouble its activities. How can we attract the returning soldier? How can we modify or extend our methods to fill our churches and chapels?

CHRISTIANS MUST FIRST RETURN TO CHRIST.

To ask, and even to answer, these questions is not enough. Neither modification nor extension of methods and activities will meet the present crisis. We need a far more radical change, a revolution. Whatever new methods we try in order to fill our churches, they will fail. Men will not be enticed into giving to us the satisfaction of seeing larger congregations in our places of worship. The failure will be deserved. Before we think of larger congregations we must think of comradeship, loyalty to the spirit of Christ, the Christian use of our money and time, and devotion to the Kingdom of Christ and the well-being of the bodies and souls of men. Before we think of prosperous churches we must learn what it means to confess Christ, to take His yoke upon us, and to love our neighbours as ourselves; to be ready to leave all to follow Him, and to lay down our lives for our brothers. In other words, we must learn to exhibit in the sphere of religion those heroic qualities which the soldier, to his eternal honour, has already learnt to exhibit on the battlefield.

Our task is neither to attract men to our churches, nor to attract them to Christ. Christ will inevitably attract them to Himself. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' If our churches are centres of a Christlike life, they too will attract men. If they do not, it is of no consequence whether they attract men or fail to do so.

THE NECESSITY FOR A CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF LIFE.

Our task is to arrive at a Christian conception and

type of life. Men who have been driven by the experiences of the war to many of the essentials of religion, but who have never found or sought those essentials in the Churches, must be able to see Christ in the communities who bear His name. The war has inaugurated a new era in the politics of the world. It has given a new standard of well-being to the industrial classes of this country. It has also challenged the religious conscience of the nation to take the teaching and example of Christ seriously. We must answer that challenge, or deny our Lord.

The aim of the succeeding chapters of this book is to illustrate the attitude of the soldier to morality, religion, and the Churches as he sees them, and to suggest what must be at once attempted and accomplished, alike by Churches and individuals, if the perils of the present day are to be averted and its magnificent opportunities fulfilled.

II

THE SOLDIER'S IDEAS OF MORALITY

NEVER perhaps in the history of our country were we face to face with such tremendous forces for good or evil as in the organized groups of men in all branches of life at the present time. Organizations of all kinds existed previous to the war, and men were assisted by them to take up ideas and act upon them *en masse*. Now the *en masse* idea has assumed much greater proportions since men entered the Army. As a rule, soldiers hesitate to act alone; they have become accustomed during the past four years to fighting, working, playing, eating, and sleeping in company with others. There is no place where men are more sensitive to being singled out and made an exhibition of than in the Army. So strong is this feeling that I have known men ask for a parade service in order that they may be marched to a service without appearing conspicuous.

When it comes to the study of the moral problem, one finds that the crowd impulse is particularly powerful. At the outset most men are willing to go the right way. It would hardly be too much to say that they desire to keep straight. But the will of the soldier is not completely his own; nearly all the interests of his life are prescribed for him. A soldier, therefore,

has only a limited opportunity for the exercise of his own will in the choosing of his own pursuits. This state of things cannot go on for a period of over four years without seriously damaging his power of initiative. So little is left to a man's choice that the tendency is to leave everything that concerns the direction of his life to others, and allow himself to be governed almost entirely by the impulse of the crowd. Numbers of men in the Army have told me that they would like to live the true life, but the fear of being regarded as the 'odd man' hindered them.

Undoubtedly John Wesley's formation of the class-meeting, on the lines it was originally started, was one of the finest strokes of genius ever made by a great Christian statesman. He saw that to call men to Christ, and then leave them to struggle alone, was worse than useless. Even Christ formed His group, recognizing that men can hardly be expected to live the Christian life alone and without assistance from their fellows. And men need the strength supplied by good comradeship to-day as never before. The group idea and the crowd impulse must be made use of by the Church for the highest ends.

It is now my intention to deal with some of the leading characteristics of the soldier's mind.

I. HUMANENESS.

There is in our soldiers a depth of affection which is strong and enduring. Writers in the past have told us that war made men cruel, hard, and inhuman. If this was so in the past, it has certainly proved untrue in regard to the soldiers of to-day. Men are much

more affectionate towards each other abroad than they ever were at home. A soldier's regard for his 'pal,' and the wonderful things he will do to show his attachment to him, have already become proverbial. Family ties and friendships have become much stronger at the front, and, although men have had to kill, it would be unjust to say that they have enjoyed it. As a general rule the soldier feels the horrors of war more, rather than less, as experience opens up to him its many ravages. The commonest exhibition of hatred and revenge have been seen when a man's affection has been deeply wounded by the loss of a pal, or of an officer whom he has loved and respected, or when the majority of his platoon or company has been wiped out. A 'dirty trick' has also served at times to fan the spark of hatred into a flame. But there has been very little hatred of a personal kind. We know how often our men have been in deadly conflict with the Germans and fraternized with them shortly afterwards.

2. HEROISM.

Before the war broke out we were told by some that chivalry had almost died out. And now, in spite of all that seemed to support the theme of our pessimists, there has been such an outburst of heroism that our age can compare more than favourably in this respect with any previous age in history. It has been remarkable how these heroic qualities, that seem to lie dormant in men under ordinary circumstances, have been awakened and have asserted themselves as a dominating force as soon as the soldiers have found themselves face to face with the enemy. This should prove a lesson to our

Churches ; when they ' go over the top ' and get outside the conventionalities in which they are entrenched, taking a bold course of action, they will find plenty of heroes to support them. The heroism of our men has been shown in thousands of cases where, handicapped by physical ailments and in spite of the fact that their nerves have been largely undermined, they have still carried on.

The cynic may say, ' They kept on because they had to.' But this is only partially true. You may lead men to the trenches, but you cannot make them fight. In this age men had reached a state of development which caused them to detest warfare of all kinds. Civilization had made their lot such that they knew nothing about the pangs of hunger or any of the discomforts of a modern battlefield. The vast majority of our soldiers came from relatively comfortable homes, and they were pitchforked into a set of circumstances that were utterly alien to them. All the dangers, hardships, privations, and the innumerable petty injustices to which they have been subjected from time to time came down with their full weight upon their sensitive natures. Is it any wonder, therefore, that some of them are embittered and seem impervious to higher things?

3. MODESTY.

The soldier mind is modest. Men who have passed through most in this war talk and write about their experiences the least. It is a standing joke among our soldiers that if you want to hear about the war you must ask those who have never been to the front. Our soldiers are far more conscious of their bad qualities

than their good, and they are, generally speaking, much better than they make themselves out to be. Let the Mrs. Grundy type please note this. A newspaper correspondent once stated that he had travelled all over the Western Front, and conversed with numbers of officers and men in each of the Allied armies. He said, 'I found out what the French were fighting for—the ideals that were wrapped up with the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine. I also found out what the Americans were fighting for—the ideals of freedom that have always been proclaimed by them. But the Lord alone knows what the British are fighting for.' What he should have said was that the French and Americans *told him* what they were fighting for, but the British would not. It is difficult to get our soldiers to admit that they are doing a good thing; they know it perfectly well, but they will not admit it. It all amounts to this: our soldiers often camouflage the best in them. And we must ever remember that very often the best among them profess the least.

4. 'ESPRIT DE CORPS.'

I should be guilty of a grave omission if I did not mention our soldiers' sense of *esprit de corps*. When one considers that the greater part of our Army was comparatively new, the sense of *esprit de corps* that sprang up was nothing short of remarkable. A soldier was drafted into a regiment of which he knew nothing, which had no connexion with the locality he came from, and no interest for him beyond the fact that he belonged to it. Yet he became so attached to that regiment that he did not like to leave it, except for

home. A soldier will sometimes deny his unit to his comrades, but let any one commence criticizing his regiment who does not belong to it, and he is up in arms immediately. I once saw a remarkable production on a door on which some enthusiast had chalked the following: 'Who saved the situation at the second battle of Ypres?' and then placed the name of his unit underneath. There followed the names of at least twenty units. *Esprit de corps* works right through the British Army, from the highest to the lowest. It is especially important for our Churches to realize this, because much will be done to build up the kingdom of God when we can seize on this spirit, and translate it into our church life.

5. FRIENDSHIP.

There is no more outstanding feature of life in the Army than in the friendships formed there. The iron bonds of friendship have been forged more generally and bind men more securely than ever before. Some of the most pathetic scenes I have ever witnessed have been where soldiers have just lost their pals. The very word 'pal' has almost become sacred. There is so much implied by it. It really connotes sacrifice to the uttermost; the giving up of everything, even life itself. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his *pal*.' A lance-corporal, slightly wounded, stayed all the day by his pal, who was more seriously wounded, and could not be moved on account of the shortage of stretcher-bearers, thus losing his chance of 'Blighty' and risking his life over and over again. That case is typical of very many in this war.

This feeling of friendship is extended in a lesser degree to the whole platoon. The longer men have lived together at the front, the less antagonistic and the more friendly they become to one another. They learn to understand one another, and as a rule there is very little bad feeling among the members of a platoon. A temporary breeze blows at times and angry words fly about, but once the question is settled it is seldom that a real grudge is harboured. Is it any wonder, then, that our men are so insistent in their demands for fellowship in the Churches? They think that the feelings of friendship among the members in the Church should be at least as great as their own towards others in the platoon. *They* do not see that the members of our Churches are ready to die for one another.

We must now deal with some of the evil habits that men contract in the Army.

I. SWEARING.

When a man joins the Army he finds that the language which prevails is a dialect, containing a considerable number of words which he has generally looked upon as belonging to the category of swearing. There are three classes of men who swear :

First, those who seem unable to say many words without the use of strong and filthy language, and who pride themselves on the long chain of ugly words which they can produce at a moment's notice. They probably swore long before they ever joined the Army, and have found splendid scope for their talents.

Secondly, those who never contracted the habit of swearing before they joined the Army, but have

formed it since. Men are social beings, and desire to be like the company to which they belong. Just as people develop a certain way of speaking through living in a particular locality, so our soldiers, especially those who are very young, pick up words and use them without any idea as to their meaning. They tell us they cannot help swearing; but they are generally able to exercise control over their tongues in the presence of ladies and officers.

The third class comprises those who do not generally indulge in bad language, but only when irritated to a high degree or when something goes wrong. They tell us they find relief in the use of certain words at such times, and that the Army is 'enough to make any man swear.'

Now, if men meant what they said when they swear, it would indeed be appalling; but it is evident that, as a rule, the words have little or no meaning attached to them at all. Swearing is not a nice habit, but if the Churches were to exclude all their members who had thus offended in this war it would be a bad look-out for the future. Having said this, I hasten to add that there are certain sides to swearing in the Army that are essentially bad. The use of bad language by the young soldier often tends to make him think and act loosely. The practice, which has been only too frequent, I am afraid, of officers and N.C.O.'s swearing at their men is detestable and mean, because the men have no chance of retaliating.

2. DRINKING.

To the soldier drink seems to have become the natural

means of good fellowship. Previous to the armistice there were fewer excessive drinkers than before the war, probably owing to the restrictions. On the other hand, there were fewer teetotallers, and a far larger number of men who, at special times such as Christmastide, when the facilities become so much greater, felt that there was no great harm in drinking to excess. A very large number of young men have become confirmed drinkers during the war who, in all probability, would never have become drinkers at all if they had not entered the Army. During the last few months there has been more drunkenness than ever before. When restrictions are removed, one finds that many of our soldiers let themselves go without any regard to the future. However, it is only fair to say that many of them have been so disgusted with what they have seen of the effects of excessive drinking that probably under better conditions they will refrain altogether from taking intoxicating beverages.

3. GAMBLING.

No one who cares about the future of our soldiers can view with anything but deep concern the growth of gambling in the Army. Cards, which offer such a variety in the choice of games, together with their adaptability to the conditions of life in crowded huts or billets, have naturally taken the first place, as far as indoor games are concerned, with our soldiers at the front. But let any one who is inclined to be censorious imagine himself in a miserable hut on a winter's night with nothing to do and nothing to read but the last letter from home. Let him further ask himself if he

is able to find it in his heart to condemn the lad who has desired to escape from thoughts only too dreadful and plunged into a pastime that made him forget his hardships and perils for a while.

I am afraid, however, that on account of this card-playing the vice of betting has gained a strong hold over very many of the men, and the pity of it is that so many of them see very little wrong in it. Of course, it may be said that the amount of money obtained by our soldiers has been too small to make the losses and gains worth considering. In answer to this contention I would say that the principle is the same, and, small or great, the fact remains that it will take a generation to eradicate the evil effects of betting in this war. Unfortunately some of our institutions, no doubt with good intentions, have pandered to this spirit by encouraging whist drives. I know the question of having whist drives is a debatable one, but I beg to suggest that the young soldier—and it is for him I am chiefly concerned—has great difficulty in distinguishing between putting so much money on a game with his pal and in paying for a ticket at a whist drive, where the money is translated into prizes.

There is only one way of combating this evil, and that is by inoculating ideas of true sport, where men will play the game for its own sake rather than for what they are able to gain.

4. IMMORALITY.

At present we are passing through the most difficult time that we have ever had in relation to the moral problem. Even the temptations to which our soldiers

have been subjected during the past years of war are small compared to those which are testing them now that the war has come to an end. At the front our soldiers were strung up to a high pitch, but now that the strain is over many become spiritually like men who are loose-jointed and cannot tell, for a while, which way they will go. Every faculty has been loosened, and the reaction has set in ; accordingly the temptations to slackness and immorality are far more terrible than heretofore. One of the principal difficulties in dealing with the extent of immorality or sexual depravity amongst our troops is that of secretiveness. In comparing two groups of men one cannot tell which are the more immoral ; if one considers the proportion of those in each group who have been tainted with disease, it does not settle the question, because others may have taken certain precautions.

There are some who advise the general adoption of preventives ; but anything of this kind, it seems to me, would have a disastrous effect, because, despite all that may be said to safeguard the giving of preventives, the mass of men would naturally interpret it as countenancing the vice. If you give a man a bathing-suit in case he bathes, he will naturally feel that you quite expect him to bathe, or at least you will not be inclined to condemn him if he bathes. Further, by giving a man a preventive or putting it within his reach, you tend to undermine his confidence in himself, and he will also feel that you have little or no confidence in him. You suggest by so doing that he may lose his power of self-control, and many a man has gone to pieces because his healthy sense

of self-respect has been undermined. There are those who counsel the delivery of lectures. If these lectures are to be delivered indiscriminately to men in the hope of deterring them from vice by creating in them a fear of disease, I am afraid that in many cases the results would be exactly the opposite. Young men do not mind incurring risks when inward passions prompt them. Lectures stimulate curiosity, encourage discussion, and there is always some wiseacre in every group of men who can put the lecturer right on certain points and tell the inquiring minds more than it is good for them to know. To say to young men, 'Don't commit this vice because of the risks you incur,' is not the way to keep them moral. The word 'don't' rouses their obstinacy, and 'risks' fascinate them.

The young soldiers who have been sitting at the feet of older men, with their stock of filthy yarns and their more than suggestive conversation, have, in only too many cases, had their minds sullied and been led astray. 'That every man is immoral in one way or another' is a common idea in the Army; I have heard youths of eighteen proclaim it. The excuse is often given by men that they have been separated from their womenfolk and are living under unnatural conditions. They also say that 'you cannot expect us to act as men when we are treated as beasts,' that 'the married man has no wife, and the single man has no chance of being married, and, after all, the moral evil caused by the war is no fault of theirs.' They further contend that they cannot be expected to live a straight, clean life when they

are surrounded by such evil influences as those which abound in the Army.

One of the commonest arguments used is that a man cannot live without satisfying his natural instincts. In the officers' mess and in the men's billet the same arguments have been proclaimed, in one form or another, and in only too many cases with disastrous effects. Now one would gather from all this that only a small proportion of the army is at all moral. But, while recognizing the gravity of the vice, we must be careful that we do not exaggerate its extent. I venture to say that, in spite of all the incentives to go wrong, the proportion of those who have been led astray is not anything like so large as many imagine. Until the armistice the greater part of our Army had been in more or less close proximity to the front line. The opportunities for indulgence had been comparatively small. The majority of cases that have come under my own personal notice have been those of men who have been living for a time in base camps, or who have indulged during their periods of leave. But the very fact that the restrictions of living at the front have prevented much immorality has made the danger all the greater since the armistice has changed these conditions. We are face to face with a state of things at the present time that makes the moral problem very grave indeed.

The chief elements in the moral problem that we have to face are as follows: How to safeguard the soldiers who have been living at the front now that so many of them are in close proximity to Continental towns; how to befriend the young discharged soldiers

who, freed from the restraints of the Army, desire to have their fling ; how to create a right attitude among the members of our Churches towards those who have gone astray ; how to correct that general looseness which has arisen in the conceptions of both women and men in regard to the inviolability of marriage, free love, and the natural instinct.

The condemnatory note is worse than useless. The only effective method of dealing with immorality is by laying the utmost emphasis on the positive principles that belong to a clean, healthy life. We must arouse in our returning soldiers an interest in all sides of life, physical, mental, and spiritual. The best way of arousing this interest is by a scheme that embodies the group idea or by the spirit of comradeship. The general assembly of a church does not at present, and probably will not for years to come, provide the necessary spirit of fellowship and intimacy. We require a league that will foster the ideals of chivalry, and bind men together in a very real comradeship to carry them out.

But any league or comradeship that has as its basis merely moral principles would be inadequate. It must have its centre and motive-power in Jesus Christ. In short, it all comes back to the strength of a man's faith in God and his own experience of Christ. The grace of God, however, acts through the medium of human fellowship, and a strong band of real comrades actuated by healthy moral and spiritual ideals will do more to keep a man straight than anything else. The Boy Scout movement gives an opportunity for getting to grips with the

moral problem among boys, and inoculating ideals into their minds of an all-round chivalrous life, as embodied in the scout law ; it has thus undoubtedly done a great deal towards the building up of moral stability in the boy's character. During my period abroad I have received innumerable testimonies from soldiers who had belonged to scout troops in the homeland as to how the movement had helped to keep them straight, and it has led me to believe more than ever in its efficiency, when properly handled, for dealing with the moral problem. We need a similar movement amongst our young men, and, until we get it, our preaching, teaching, and lecturing, in this respect, will be in vain. The only way this enemy can be successfully overcome is by outflanking him and not by a frontal attack.¹

¹'To meet this need is the aim of the recently started 'Regnal League.'

III

THE SOLDIER'S IDEAS OF RELIGION

IN considering the soldier's ideas of religion, we do not forget he was, and again is, a civilian. The average Englishman at home is very inarticulate; in France and Flanders he was a little more communicative. The impact of war elicited responses which we did not observe in days of peace. War, with its changeful circumstance; its monotony, peril, sickness, hardship, comradeship, wounds; its high justice sometimes obscured, then blazing up again in a purer idealism, its doubtful issue ending in a military victory—war opened windows through which we imagined we saw the soul of the real man. The soldier and the civilian are one; but no man is completely unified, and we have a very complex man to consider. By selecting examples, excluding their opposites and divergents, it would be easy to prove any theory regarding men's religious ideas. Johan Bojer's hero, in *The Great Hunger*, discovered that he had in him many men, any one of which might have become dominant in the terrible crisis through which he was passing. With 'five minutes to go,' the impressive spectacle has been witnessed of a whole battalion kneeling upon the trench fire-step in prayer. They

were not quite the same men when in a safe job at the base. A broken man on a stretcher has some use for religion, though he may manifest little piety when sound in mind and limb. His varied response to religious appeal may appear inconsistent; the important question is, Which is the real man, the man who will give the final response and fix his moral destiny? I want to give the facts, however inconsistent with each other they may seem, and however they may fail to support my theory of action given at the close.

HEAVEN AND DUTY.

The average man's ideas about religion lack definiteness upon vital matters, whilst he is very definite in associating many things with religion which have nothing to do with essential Christianity. He does not realize that Christian faith includes complete identification with Christ in the fulfilment of His world-redeeming purpose. Religion for him has no such positive programme; he views it as a series of negatives — 'thou shalt not' do this, say that, go there. There are no feasts or wedding-garments in his conception of religion; it seems to bang, bolt, and bar every door leading into the banqueting-hall of life. Heaven itself is a belated reward for endless denial here. Religion may be a happy thing for the world to come; but here it strips life bare. It cuts a man off from the larger, brighter part of mankind, makes him a peculiar person, a sort of hunchback among his fellows; it is a real handicap in the race of life. Such are his definite thoughts; they are a complete negation of the religion of Jesus Christ.

Religious duty appears to the mass of men to consist in attending numerous meetings with no very clearly defined object, unless it be to gain a deeper resignation with regard to things as they are; or else to pass a resolution condemning other people's pleasures. Such duties do not command his conscience; in such objects he takes only an occasional interest. The broken, sorrowing man has a use for religion; the strong man has not. The Church has not yet made religion appeal to the whole of a man all the time.

Are men wholly to blame for this false conception of religion and their consequent indifference towards it? Churches, creeds, Christians, are largely, chiefly, responsible for the inadequate representation of the Christian religion. Christ has not merely been dwarfed; that was inevitable with our limited knowledge. His figure has been distorted, and His programme treated as an impossible dream.

CHARACTER, CEREMONIES, AND FAITH.

Men have a deep admiration for superior character. If it be associated with religious profession, there is little of the petty, silly persecution of earlier times. But men do not necessarily attribute good character to religion. The superior character is credited with making religion attractive; Christ is not credited with having made the religious man attractive. In doctrine and in practice religion has so often been divorced from ethics that it is not surprising if men think that the good would have been superior either with or without religion. Such ideas encourage

men to struggle on without seeking the help of religion.

Religion, again, has often been identified with forms and ceremonies, or with 'joining the Church'; while 'taking their Communion' has been accepted, even urged upon men, by priests, as the final consummation of religious faith. Men are indifferent, contemptuous, or indignant, according to temperament, when offered such stones for bread. 'He puts the Church at the centre, where Christ ought to be, and I am tired of hearing him preach the Church,' was the soldier's common criticism.

Indifference was not the universal attitude, nor the total response to religion. The soldiers' faith was as simple as it was remarkable. Their religion was elemental, like that of a little child. The average man's prejudices are strongly against organized religion, its demands and expressions; but instinctively men are religious. So, when life is stripped bare to its last reality, one finds a man, or a battalion, praying to God in simple confidence that He will not fail them. It may appear to us, though not to them, very inconsistent with their remarks about religion, their neglect of the ordinary means of grace, their prejudice against parsons and churches; but it is a remarkable evidence that man is 'incurably religious.' The instinct for God cannot be destroyed by the failure of the individual or the Church to nurture it.

The war has revealed elemental man; it has intensified all our primitive passions. Love, hate, the physical desires, the spiritual yearnings, and the

moral and fighting qualities have all surged up from the deeps. Civilization has proved to be only a thin crust incapable of holding down the stronger forces of personality. Browning always contended that man's nature is spiritual. However encrusted by sin, crushed by State oppression, perverted by false or inadequate creeds, secularized by social falsehood, weakened by artificiality, a man may at any moment become volcanic. The dynamite of the spirit shatters all except the imperishable soul, made in God's image and craving His life. Men at war have justified this view. It is the one really encouraging religious fact regarding that great mass supposed to be callously indifferent.

All this demands a modification of our common definitions of 'faith.' Some have taught that the only faith which saves is faith in a 'plan of salvation'; others depend upon observance of rites or submission to priestly function; while most Christians have made orthodox opinion at least a *proof* of real faith. The soldier's faith is at least as complete as any of the above, though it includes none of them. He simply believes that Almighty God will somehow father him, whether he merits it or not, that his unutterable need will command Christ's care, and that God will not fail him in this world or any other. It is the immature faith of a child, but it is implicit. He goes 'over the top' pale of face and with no very clear understanding of spiritual things; but instinct trusts the great Father-love of God, and the heart believes that, if a bullet pierces it, the dying man will fall into the Everlasting Arms of Mercy. Who dare

say that this is not saving faith? It may be imperfect; but if a man's apprehension of religion has been so incomplete that such a faith is his best possible, it will open the door into life eternal. By grace are we saved, as the apostle said; and the grace is never imperfect. That is our joy as we think of the thousands who had no experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ and who went 'over the top' never to come back.

The above answers the question as to whether men were fatalistic or superstitious. There were superstitious acts among officers and men; but most of them were laughed at by all. The language of fatalism was sufficiently current to suggest a sermon on 'Faith and Fatalism.' Men said a shell or bullet must have their number on, or it could not hit them; but few really believed it. Such phrases were the ill-defined expressions of a blind trust in God, not the confessions of impotence in presence of an unintelligent fate.

CONVERSIONS.

The alleged 'revival in the trenches' never took place. The chaplains might have seen all the usual manifestations had they aimed at them. On many occasions, it is almost certain that all present would have openly confessed acceptance of Christ had they been asked to do so. Chaplains who saw conversions every Sunday night among men who were training in England in 1914, and who have also seen even greater numbers since their recent return from France, felt themselves under a grave restraint;

and they simply urged men to crown Christ as Lord in their own hearts. Between battles, with comrades fallen yesterday, and the pressure of imminent death heavy upon the spirit, lifelong evangelists felt that it would be unfair to take advantage of circumstance, and that if they did do so the results would be unreal. But, no doubt, along the whole front thousands found God, and thousands more were helped towards Him by our chaplains. To that extent there was a revival, and a real one.

The attendance of men at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was some indication of their attitude to Christ. The number of Nonconformists was remarkable ; frequently fifty per cent. of those present at the parade service remained for Holy Communion. It astonished our Church of England friends that very often, where they had sixty-five per cent. in the brigade to our twenty-five per cent., though they urged Holy Communion, while we only invited to it, our communicants equalled or outnumbered theirs. Had we given Holy Communion more prominence, we should have secured more ; had the Anglicans given it a less central place, they also would have drawn more. We need to learn from each other.

GENUINE RELIGION.

A minority of soldiers had a real experience of vital religion ; the proportion of Nonconformists amongst them was more than creditable. In fairness it should be stated that the weaker Nonconformists were down as ' Church of England,' which raised our standard. Among our men were many who knew

what they believed. They read their Bibles, attended prayer and testimony meetings in any old hayloft, dugout, or tent. Their presence, whenever possible, at our voluntary evening services brought power. Such were usually the strongest men in their company. They were consulted by their comrades ; they advised the perplexed, comforted the troubled, and pointed penitent men to God. Before a battle a group would surround a local preacher, whom all loved because he was as jolly as he was godly, while he told them of the Christ who could carry them 'over the top,' not without physical fear, but with joy and peace of mind. Whatever happened it would mean victory.

Real Christians shone equally well on ordinary duty. Their officers would speak of them in the highest terms. Their comrades delighted to do them honour. On one occasion several men were decorated on parade. The three highest distinctions which were first presented were received by our men, of whom we were justly proud. Religion makes a good man better. Those who went into the Army with the real thing in their hearts did not whine that army life made religion impossible ; they witnessed to the deeper preciousness of Christ's peace amid fear and horror. Many devout Christians joined the R.A.M.C. in 1914. Their service on behalf of the wounded was discharged with bravery, sympathy, and unswerving devotion. These men themselves conducted nightly meetings for prayer, testimony, and Bible study. Their influence reached other units, and conversions were frequent.

The value of genuine religion has been verified,

whilst mere mental assent to orthodox creeds failed to stand the shock of war. A few men announced beforehand that if we lost the war they would lose faith ; which showed they had no confidence in a higher wisdom or a vaster plan than their own. In the retreat of March, 1918, an officer said he had lost faith ; that God was not with us ; but a question elicited the fact that he had never believed sufficiently in God to commit himself to the divine programme, or even to ask the divine aid. On the other hand, those who really knew Christ before learned to know Him better. His spiritual law was verified—'To him that hath shall be given.' Scores have given their testimony to the real presence of Christ in hours of peril, so that, terribly real as were shells and bullets, Christ was more real still.

What may we expect as the final response of the soldiers to such a Saviour? Is the religious instinct so strong, the craving for God so deep, that if the real Christ were seen He would be accepted by the mass of men? When democracy becomes critical, or the rulers become dedicated to righteousness, Christ will be crowned ; that is our assured conviction. The features of the crowd which are most discouraging are often the defects of their good qualities. Their lack of critical judgement makes men more subject to crowd-consciousness. Again, conventional standards are accepted, submitted to, even supported, because never questioned by an awakened critical faculty. But the crowd-consciousness is remarkably sensitive to the sympathies and antipathies of churchgoers as a whole ; and their judgement, silent or pronounced,

possesses an amazing accuracy. True, they do not discriminate justly; they include all religious people under a general suspicion.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST.

If the Church were as perfect as Christ could make her, would the men we knew on the battle-fronts rally to the standard of religion? No, not all; not nearly all. For a time perhaps a majority would be against the Church, but not always. Very soon the Church's purpose would be manifest to all men.

Around a mess-table in France some soldiers had argued themselves to a standstill about religion, without solving any problem. After a pause one asked, 'Then what will ever bring about the changes we desire?' A splendid, thoughtful, most efficient young officer replied, with an air of deep conviction, 'I believe that Jesus Christ, if He came again, would be able to do it; otherwise it cannot be done.' His judgement was the more interesting in that he was identified with no Church. If Christ could perpetuate Himself in the undying Church, 'one heart setting another heart on fire,' then the power of organized selfishness would be utterly broken. All our institutions—religious, political, educational, industrial, social—would come under the control of Christian men, and the Lordship of Christ would be acknowledged by the multitude. Honours which are now awarded to successful exploitation would be bestowed upon men for service. It is not difficult to believe that when peaceful, constructive labour receives grateful acknowledgement, equal to that given to

war service involving no greater sacrifice, we shall see men everywhere competing in a healthy rivalry to make their highest contribution to the State.

Men need a tremendous challenge. In quite ordinary men there is not only the instinct for God, but the spirit of adventure. The spirit of adventure, like the fighting spirit, is a divinely implanted element in personality. Gambling and war are false expressions of noble qualities. The strong desire adventure; except in the foreign mission-field, what can the Church offer to daring spirits? Yet, surely, the greatest battle is to be fought at home, if only we dare issue an ultimatum. Men crave risk. Millions are home again who have known the thrill of battle. Religion challenges men to risk their all in the noblest adventure of all. Hitherto the Church has not appealed to men in their strength. The broken seek God's house for comfort and the spirit of resignation. Religion is thought to be for the unlucky, the decrepit; those for whom this life has proved a disappointment. It is, indeed, for them, because it meets the want of all; but it is also, and specially, for the young, strong, and free. The Church must convince all men of this truth, 'Ye are complete in *Him*.'

Millions have come home expecting to build a new world, in which personality shall be valued above things. All these, while they were denied the false security of a degrading civilization, manifested a deep, undying instinct for God, a joy in fellowship, a submission to discipline, a spirit of wild, happy adventure; and for the sake of an ideal of justice, a dream of freedom, they counted not their lives as of

any account in comparison with attaining the goal.

Let the Church as a whole, and unitedly, challenge this humanity, in the name of Christ, to create a new spiritual and material order of society. Let the ultimatum be clear to those who desire to perpetuate wrongs for personal advantage. It will be a long war, but the result will be assured ; the kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and His Christ.

IV

THE SOLDIER'S IDEAS ABOUT THE CHURCHES

WIDESPREAD INDIFFERENCE.

In considering the soldier's ideas about the Churches, or about any other subject, we must beware of generalization. There is no such person as the British soldier. There is a vast number of soldiers, drawn from every class and from every walk in life, and also from every religious denomination. It is more dangerous to talk about 'the soldier' than about 'the man in the street,' because in the Army there are multitudes of men who have not the remotest resemblance to the type we have in mind when we talk about 'the man in the street.' Churchwardens, deacons, and circuit stewards have served in the ranks side by side with ministers of every religious body, and side by side with men who have never been inside a church in their lives.

Still, it is true that in any gathering of men, in a hut or even a Y.M.C.A., the chances are that the majority, if they were in the mood to talk frankly, would profess themselves quite indifferent to churches and church organizations in civil life. Many of them would admit, perhaps rather shyly, that they had been accustomed at some early age to attend a Sunday school, and they would probably find themselves

able to remember their old teacher ; they certainly will not have forgotten the hymns they used to sing.

Many of them, too, will tell you that the wife or the mother has been a member of some mothers' meeting ; and it may be that the tone in which this information is given suggests that it might be as well for you not to inquire further on this point at the moment.

The churches, they will tell you, are the places for people who are comfortably off, and have not always to be worrying about next week's rent or to-morrow's meals ; but for those who have to struggle to make both ends meet they are of little use.

THE FORMALITY OF THE CHURCHES.

The fact is, as you would soon discover in such a conversation, that most of the men have no idea of the part which the Churches play, or ought to play, in social life. What they do suspect in this direction they misunderstand. The prevailing idea seems to be that the Churches stand for formality. As for making a real difference to man's life or needs, or counting for anything in a man's troubles, they would no more turn to it for help than to a parade service in camp on a Sunday morning.

It is not our business at the moment to criticize this point of view. That it is open to criticism is obvious enough. But it must be understood. Nor is it entirely unreasonable. The soldier's job is essentially one of hard knocks, both given and received. As far as he has observed, the Churches do not move in the region of hard knocks. They do not appear

to him to know anything about such things. He wants to be stiffened and braced for the battle of life. And he does not see that the Churches are prepared to give him the necessary stiffening. Although they exhort him to sing about 'running the straight race,' their general effect is to mollify and soothe, and for that process he has 'no use.'

REASON FOR THIS APATHY.

If he is pressed further, he will very soon begin to talk about the disunity of the Churches. 'Why can't we have just one Church?' he will ask. 'We are all going to the same place.' Of Church history he knows nothing. It is true that a course of lectures in Church history might promise to be even less interesting than many lectures which have recently been delivered to soldiers by educational enthusiasts, but without some knowledge of Church history the fact that denominational differences cannot instantly be swept away is bound to seem surprising.

He knows that differences of ritual exist; but he is not interested in them. All ministers alike are 'parsons' or 'padres.' Army traditions, indeed, have ground the distinction between 'C. of E.' and 'R.C.' into the minds of most regimental sergeant-majors. In the vague outside region of the 'fancy religions,' 'Wesleyan' is the only name he knows, unless he happens to be a Presbyterian. Even in regiments recruited in Lancashire and Yorkshire, Baptists and Congregationalists are absolutely beyond the ken of the majority of men in all ranks. And the fact that most men who care about religion at all are

quite happy at an entirely 'undenominational' service in a Y.M.C.A. hut, conducted by a padre who belongs sometimes to one Church, sometimes to another, and sometimes by a man who is not a padre at all, only adds to his perplexity.

INTRUSION.

The soldier has another reason for keeping clear of the Churches which is not quite so readily appreciated by civilians. He lives in publicity. He is never alone. If he is informed or questioned about matters he is expected to know, it is 'on parade,' or at least when he is 'standing to attention,' and in tones which any bystander can hear. Even if he is 'told off,' there is no secrecy in the process; sympathizers as well as enemies know all about it. All his belongings must be opened to periodical inspections—even his body! The only private property left to him is his thoughts.

Now he considers that the Churches are organizations for prying into his thoughts. Why cannot these religious people, he asks, let him alone? The apocryphal but oft-told tale about the recruit who was given a number, 658, and, feeling utterly tired out one evening, went into a meeting tent, to be greeted with, 'No. 658, "Art thou weary, art thou languid?"' and fled, exactly illustrates this sense of intrusion on his one little remaining plot of privacy.

DEMANDS FOR MONEY.

In civilian life the argument is often advanced that the Churches' incessant demands for money

drive people away or prevent them from approaching. In the Army, circumstances are different. The 'C. of E.' man does not fear the money-getting propensities of his Church. They are small compared with those which characterize the Churches of his 'non-C. of E.' brothers. If a collection happens to be made at a parade service, there is no necessity for him to give. In this respect Wesleyans and 'United Board' soldiers differ from him. Most of them are quite accustomed to collections, and to contributing to them. We have known Nonconformist parade services where collections have been taken each Sunday, and practically every man has contributed at each service, and not an objection, even in private, has ever been hinted.

It must not be inferred, however, that the soldier, under whatever denomination he is entered, is stingy even in religion. One and all abhor pew-rents. They feel at home at once in a Y.M.C.A. hall ; in the ordinary church they are haunted by the fear that they may be turned out of the seat they have occupied. But they will all give cheerfully if appealed to properly, and if the object is one they can understand and appreciate. And, even apart from the object, they will give to a church that has shown friendliness to them. It is a kind of payment for real value received.

DISLIKE.

The man who openly avows his dislike to the Churches is a rare specimen. He exists, of course ; and he will often inform you at the same time that he is a socialist or an atheist ; and he is generally as

ignorant of Socialism and Atheism as of the Churches he dislikes.

But one learns many things in conversations with men when they are not playing for an admiring audience, and have no fear that they are being cross-questioned or 'inspected.'

Long sermons are heartily disliked, though even here we have known men who missed the half-hour's discourse to which they had been accustomed in their chapel at home. Difficult hymns are disliked equally ; and this even though, with the majority of men, the hymns which are obviously not difficult are disappointingly and painfully few. Elaborate ritual finds no defenders ; nor is there any enthusiasm for the padre who favours vestments, candles, and altar decorations.

If he has a character that appeals to the men, the High Church parson will be liked, quite independently of his private ritualistic preferences ; just as his Nonconformist colleague will be liked for the same reason. Men will even help him to arrange his altar and collect his flowers in their spare time. But if he were suddenly to drop these appendages, no one would miss them ; and another padre, who aroused no personal enthusiasm, would gain nothing from his ritual.

UNWORTHY MEMBERS.

Undoubtedly one of the most serious causes—or shall we say excuses?—for dislike is the existence of unworthy members and adherents of Churches. The average soldier is the first to be adversely influenced in his opinion of a Church when he knows of some unworthy representative. He judges another regiment

which he sees on parade, not by its traditions or its opinion of itself, but by the turn-out of its rank and file ; why should he not, therefore, judge of the Churches in the same way?

It may be that the unworthy member has not fallen very seriously from grace. Possibly he has been seen doing, on a single occasion, what his critic will do a dozen times a day without a twinge of conscience. The argument—at least from the conduct of the critic who urges it—may be grossly unfair : ‘ I don’t say I never swear, because I do ; but if Bill Smith’s religion can’t keep him from swearing, what’s the good of it ? ’

Perhaps there is something in this point of view after all. We may be thankful that the average man does expect a good deal of the Churches and their members. If men were to imply in their talk that Christians would not be expected to be different from others, we should indeed have reason to begin to despair. They do at least respect the ideal. They certainly respect the man who tries honestly and bravely to fulfil it.

LOYAL AND KEEN.

There are men who certainly do fulfil the ideal—men who are loyal to Christ in the face of all temptation ; and few who have not actually shared the life of the barrack-room or hut can conceive how powerful those temptations are. There are men who are so keen to win recruits for their Master that they overcome that last infirmity of the soldier’s mind, the fear of being ridiculed by his comrades.

These, however, it must be confessed, are few and far between. Nor can we wonder. Probably many of those who bewail the fact have lived, religiously, more or less sheltered lives, and have never known what it feels like to be suddenly plunged into an entirely irreligious atmosphere, in which a Christian is not perhaps very vigorously persecuted, but looked on as a freak or a curiosity, or a sort of harmless maniac. Very few lads have ever been trained or prepared in their old churches and chapels to stand this sort of thing. No wonder if they give way.

But those who do stand the test can be relied upon for anything. The Army is a great and surprising revealer of character. Men who in civil life never seemed to have anything in them which would bring them to the front now show that they have real mettle. They may not always make the smartest soldiers or the strongest athletes; but once it is known that they cannot be moved in the matter of religion, their influence in many directions is enormous.

Nor are their adversities few. It is not easy for any man to have to emphasize his singularities every hour, almost every moment, of the day. Least of all is it easy in the Army, where every one tries his hardest to be like every one else; and infractions of this rule are punished unofficially, but generally pretty severely. But if they make it clear that they care more for obeying Jesus Christ than for reproving the shortcomings of their comrades, they often become the wonder of their hut, and in the long run they and their faith obtain respect. Such a man may

not convert his comrades ; but he will have many a proof that he is trusted and liked.

OFFICERS.

A word may here be added about the officers. In the main they are absolutely indifferent, and officers who have come into the Army from Christian surroundings are in many cases content to hide their colours entirely. Etiquette of the stern rule of seniority muffles many. There is an enormous difference in the atmosphere and customs of different officers' messes. Some are as friendly as others are the reverse ; but very few of them allow the absolute freedom that there is in a hut. The adverse influences felt by a Christian subaltern, though more refined, are generally at least as powerful as those which surround his fellow Christian in the ranks. Be that as it may, to be greeted by an officer as a fellow Methodist is very rare, and 'ferreting out' has always been necessary in the discovery of fellow Methodist officers. All, however, are willing to agree that the process has been to one's mutual advantage.

The average Church of England officer is either quite indifferent to religion—although he may be a very good fellow and keen on the welfare, social and moral as well as physical, of his men—or else he is High Church. The evangelical 'C. of E.' officer is, in our experience, very rare. It has often been said, and with a great deal of truth, that in any future provision for the religious well-being of the Army the officers should be planned for even more carefully than the men.

THE Y.M.C.A. TYPE OF SERVICE.

In conclusion, a few words may be said as to the nature of service which the Army appreciates. The Y.M.C.A. type, which, in its constituent elements of hymns, prayers, lesson, and address, is indistinguishable from the ordinary Nonconformist service, is usually very much enjoyed. This is partly because it is an absolute contrast to the parade service. The men are often invited, for example, to choose their own hymns.

Naturally there is a danger lest the 'free-and-easy' character should be over-emphasized. Irreverence, however, is never popular among the men, though some speakers and leaders never learn this reassuring fact. But the conduct of the service depends entirely on the leader. If he has 'the knack,' and can maintain his hold on his congregation, he can arrange the service as he likes. He may not have been personally known to the men before ; but some men have the art of establishing relations at once with an audience of soldiers.

The man who can do this may set his congregation singing one Sankey chorus after another ; or he may lead them through a dozen collects ; he will be able to press his message home. It may be true, as our Anglican friends assert, that in worship the man is nothing, the service is everything. The experience of the Army has shown that for a successful service a leader is necessary who can come near to his fellow worshippers, and at the same time is recognized to be able to come near to God,

ESSENTIALS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMP SERVICE.

All this will make the character of a camp service which 'goes well' fairly clear. And at a period when men are pouring out of the Army into civil life, and may be as completely lost to civilian church life as they may be lost to the ways of thinking and acting which they followed before they entered the Army, the experience of camp services must be utilized by the Churches.

Many men, it must be remembered, have come into touch with religion for the first time in the Army. Men have listened to earnest evangelical appeals in a crowded Y.M.C.A. or a Wesleyan hut who had not been in a church for years until they put on khaki.

The services must be short ; so must sermons. If at the end of the sermon the congregation says to itself, 'He might have gone on a bit longer,' so much the better.

There must be no patronage ; nothing of the offensive attitude which came out in the remark from a platform by one padre that 'he liked talking to common soldiers.'

The hymns must be good ; and they need not necessarily be of the Sankey type. Men will open their lungs for almost any hymn if they know and like the tune, but the singing of a hymn is more than a pleasant vocal interlude, and men can appreciate a good hymn, apart from the tune, if they are given the chance.

Finally, and most important of all, there must be conviction on the part of the speaker. He need not be brilliant, nor in any sense an orator ; but he must know what he wants to say, and he must mean it. To

talk for the sake of talking, to get up 'to say a few words,' is fatal. There is no persuasive power like that which comes from the speaker's certainty about the immense significance of what he is saying. No audience makes such a demand for this power as an audience of soldiers, and no audience responds to it with such instant recognition.

V

WHAT IS THE CHURCH FOR?

I. THE CHURCH AS THE CRUSADE FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

In that spiritual reconstruction which is the immediate task of this generation we shall need to restore the conception of the Church as the society for the creation of the Kingdom of God on earth. That the Church, with its worship and ceremonies, its ethics and interpretation of life, its mysteries and miracles, is *for* something, and not an end in itself, is an idea foreign to the thought of the great majority of those whose allegiance she seeks. To them the Church has been too parochial, too individual, too self-centred. Of its wider vision and range as interpreted in the enterprise of the foreign field they have known little or nothing.

‘I should like to see a more reckless ambition in the Church,’ exclaimed Dr. Parker in a critical moment; and this conception of the Church’s responsibility as the instrument of the Kingdom would surely supply both the ambition and the spirit of recklessness so desirable if she is to claim men in the service of God. A story going the rounds at the moment is a good

example of the recognition by the 'Tommy' of what is her true vision and vocation. After one of the engagements on the Western Front an army chaplain was busy in one of the canteens where men had just gathered from the front. They were drinking coffee from steaming mugs as they squatted or lolled wherever their exhausted limbs could find room. In order to express his appreciation of their courage and at the same time cheer them up, he was moving from group to group, reminding them of the prize in view. 'Men, you've done splendidly,' he was telling them, 'and you're helping to make a new world by all this'; when one of the men lowered his mug and, regarding him over the top of it, said, 'No, sir, we're only scrapping an old world; it's your job to build a new one.'

That her vision of this uniting Kingdom has been so vague and that she has had so little practical faith in it has been a tragedy. A generation ago Frederic Harrison declared that the Christian Churches were responsible for European wars, implying that if there had been a strong and united Church she could have vetoed war. In our own day an equally discerning and critical writer, Mr. H. G. Wells, has insisted that 'the European catastrophe is the tragedy of a weak though righteous Christian will.' One result of her neglect in this respect has been that the definite ideal and organization of the goodwill necessary for the healing of the world's ugly schisms is now enthusiastically undertaken by non-church-going masses as a political and 'class' interest and effort.

The rise and growth of the 'International' is surely

a fact that must give food for serious reflection. How comes it that this ideal, which at best is but a pale reflection of the Christian conception of the Kingdom of God, has usurped the place and won the allegiance due by right to Christ and His Kingdom? Why have these ideals of a common brotherhood and goodwill such as will make devastating war impossible in the future found an expression almost hostile to the Church? How is it that the ideal of the 'International' has called forth the enthusiastic devotion of great masses of the people, who scarcely recognize it as an uninspired substitute for the ideal of the 'Kingdom'? Why, except that we have given these men the impression that we are so preoccupied with the business of 'running' the Church that we have no time and no vision for the crusade to establish that Kingdom which alone is the complete expression and can supply the adequate motive-power of this ideal?

A necessary corollary to a new vision of the Kingdom of God as the objective and supreme concern of the Church would be the adopting of new and unconventional methods of service. It is a fact worthy of note that every leader in the Church who has received and transmitted to his day and generation a fresh vision of the Kingdom of God has been compelled by that very vision to scrap old methods of service and adopt new, usually to the very great concern of the saints who are at ease in Zion. From St. Francis and Xavier and Wesley to General Booth and Hugh Price Hughes, every man who has caught a new vision of the Kingdom, whether as coming in Rome or India

or West London, has equally dared and developed new methods, sought new avenues of service, or formed new societies of consecrated crusaders. Every new vision demands a new venture for its realization.

Is it too much to assert that this generation has, as one result of the bloody travail through which it has passed, revisualized the Kingdom of God as a brotherhood of nations in which war shall be no more? Is the Church of this generation prepared to revise her methods, organize her workers, instruct her members, driven thereto by a sense of urgency which makes such revision an imperative duty? What of the mass of young life returned but recently from the tyranny and torture of the trenches, and seething with an unrest and reaction that is in no small degree the inevitable result of the contradiction which has been as one long pain in its heart—the contradiction between the ghastly experiences of the past years and those Christian ideals learned in the home and taught in the Church? Is there a soul so optimistic as to assert that there exists any systematic thought or teaching in the Church that will bridge over this threatening gulf of contradiction and turn this wealth of reaction into passionate propaganda on behalf of the Kingdom?

Recently a 'League of Youth' has been formed with the avowed purpose of bringing youth into 'informed activity in politics.' Is not the youth of our churches ready to be brought into 'informed activity' in the cause of the Kingdom? Will the Church not urge upon it that this problem of world-reconciliation, of the establishing of real peace as opposed to the map-mongering, gun-guaranteed 'security' of imperialistic

parties and politicians, is their problem—the contribution to the coming Kingdom that they must make if they are not to fail the future ?

The time has surely come when the conventional ideas of Christian 'service' as represented by Sunday-school effort, local preaching, visiting, and a few other recognized forms of church activity should give place to a larger interpretation of the service which the 'Kingdom' demands of all its crusaders. The exploration of the possibilities of such service is one of the urgent demands of the moment, and is a first responsibility of any who would claim the name of 'leader.' May not one form of new service be made possible by the definite instruction and equipment of our young men and women in the historical, social, economic, international, spiritual, and personal implications of war ? By means of study-circles, lectures, incentives to private study, conferences, and possibly even by a wiser use of some of our week-night services, may we not aim at fitting them to have some knowledge of the mind of Christ as it applies to the problems which may settle or unsettle the world for another century ?

Such a conception of the course before us will demand time, determination, and preparation. It will require the services of scholars, lay and ministerial. It must be a considered policy of the Church, both local and universal. Above all, such a crusade must begin now, whilst our young men and women are acutely conscious of their debt to the dead and their responsibility to the future. It must begin now, when they, with democracy as a whole, are suffering from an ever-growing reaction against

the militarism of the last four years—a reaction whose as yet inarticulate power is potent for great good or greater evil. It must begin now, while there is in so many hearts a reaction from the materialism of the past years, resulting in an appreciation of the spiritual realities of life, love, friendship, home, and God—realities that for the moment are standing in vivid contrast with the mere dressings of that life to which many had hardly dared hope to return. The iron is malleable now. Shall it be moulded?

During nearly four years of service the writer has of set purpose engaged in literally hundreds of conversations in messes with officers, and in the trenches with men—conversations of which the war problems and their relation to Christ have been the subject. The result has been twofold. On the one hand has been evidence of utter lack, even in those who represent a certain social and educational level, of distinctively Christian mind and conscience. Their theology has been the theology of the Old Testament. On the other hand, he has been encouraged beyond measure with the ready response that has been forthcoming—a response usually involving the contradiction of previously held convictions—when the application of the distinctively Christian ideals and principles of action has been urged in solution of the problems that have been the burden of every man's thought.

Let the Church teach such as realize their inefficiency and need in this direction that it must be their part, by definite and arduous study and much prayer, to equip themselves individually and corporately to

render the 'service' of understanding and insisting upon the mind of Christ in relation to the problems, social, economic, and international, which demand a Christian solution, if the sacrifice of the past is not to be in vain. Let them regard it as their service for the Kingdom to serve on every board, committee, council, paper, commission, that will enable them to impress upon the policies and programmes of men the mind and the ideal of Christ.

Such an interpretation of this and other forms of the Kingdom demands the exercise of those twin virtues which have found a first place in the lives of men who have faced the horrors of battle. It will demand both courage and sacrifice. In the face of the common confession of lack of courage and the conscious sense of inability in the Church, may it not be argued that these virtues are in a peculiar sense the outcome of the Pentecostal gift of power? But it will be remembered that the Master linked this promise of power with the programme of the Kingdom. It was a promised power for a purposed programme. May it be that we have lacked the power because we have neglected the programme—the establishment of the Kingdom on earth?

II. THE CHURCH AS THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALL BELIEVERS.

The reader of the Acts of the Apostles cannot fail to be impressed with the place and importance of that fellowship which is almost the first fact in the life of the primitive Church to arrest his attention. The first fact that would impress a discerning observer

in the Army is the spirit of real and utterly unself-conscious fellowship amongst the men. The writer cannot easily forget the impression that was made on him in the early days on the Gallipoli Peninsula by an example of this spirit of camaraderie. He had hailed a passing ambulance that was lumbering down one of the gullies with its load of wounded, and had clambered up to the driver's seat, where sat several of the patients. 'Here you are, sir,' was the greeting he received from one of the men; 'we're all mates here'; and no sooner had the wagon restarted than the man went on to explain how surprised he was that he should give such a greeting to 'a parson like you.' The 'Tommy's' evident delight in the experience led him to the philosophy of the fact. Pulling at his pipe, he continued meditatively, 'Funny that a man should have to come out to this b——y hole to learn that we're all chums.' A long pause followed, broken only by an involuntary groan from a patient as the wagon jolted over a particularly bad hole in the road; then the incident closed as he added the words, 'It's almost worth it all, too.'

A comparison between the Army and the early Church in respect of this experience of fellowship is illuminating. Of both it might be written, 'And they were together, and had all things in common.' In one case this community of interests and possessions was the result of a spiritual fellowship; in the other case fellowship was the outcome of community of interests and possessions. Possibly both factors need to be taken into account if the Church of this new age is to supply a fellowship that will attract and hold

the men that have tasted and attested the fellowship of arms. Certainly it can be said that no Church will succeed which does not supply a fellowship in which, if not *all* things are in common, yet at least all the things that count in a true friendship are in common. A Church in which the faintest element of exclusiveness or snobbishness exists will be doubly damned.

Herein there is not a little encouragement for those who labour amongst 'the people called Methodists.' At a recent Conference it was stated that 'John Wesley took the word "grace" out of the atmosphere of the courts and placed it in the atmosphere of the home.' This emphasis on the fellowship of the Church as a household fellowship is rightly claimed as a *differentia* of our Church ; and, despite an outward and formal weakening of the fellowship of the class-meeting at home, this fact and tradition of fellowship has stood the test of service. It is probably true to say that no padre is so immediately 'at home' with his men, and so instinctively at one with them, as the Wesleyan chaplain. There is a certain freemasonry that is in the last analysis the result of the instinct and tradition of the class-meeting, and especially of the wider interpretation of the idea of fellowship that has been in days past the genius of our Church.

The problem before us is how we are to revive and reinterpret this spirit in the present so that it shall supply an essential need. Perhaps we might reach the heart of the matter by insisting that we must reinterpret the word 'fellowship' in the terms

of 'friendship.' If we are 'the friends of all,' and if we attempt no service except on the basis of friendship, may we not recover for our day the essential fact of fellowship, which we have somehow almost lost, and make it live and move and have its being amongst us once more as an alluring experience? The experience came to the writer when he learned that he had to do things *with* men rather than for them. The chaplain who would be successful had to make the discovery that he must first become a man's friend if he would lead him to Christ. He must live with him, smoke with him, march with him, suffer with him, before he could attempt effective spiritual ministry.

The example of the Church as a society of friends in which there exists an inner and intimate friendship of men and women whose friendship overflows into the lives of others and seeks their friendship for friendship's sake, will meet with a ready response from men who have learned as never before what fellowship may mean. In a new sense the Church will become the home of its members, encouraging a spirit of camaraderie and mutual improvement and a wide development of life that shall make provision for all the healthy instincts of human nature.

Such an ideal may mean some necessary rearrangements in the activities and outlook of the Church, and especially of the minister. The Church must be prepared to place the first things first, and this matter of the definite quest and cultivation of friendship is a first claim on the time and energy of the friends of the Master. It will necessitate the relegation of

many things hitherto regarded by some almost with veneration to a secondary place. What chaplain on the recommencement of his circuit work but has felt the difficulty of escaping the insistent claims of routine committees and sub-committees that week by week absorb his energy and time and very effectively prevent his visiting the men of his congregation at the only time when they are accessible? With what urgency does his soul not hark back to the days when, untroubled by the thought of such calls on his time, he could spend himself in the quest of friendship, well knowing that through that friendship he could hope with confidence to lead men to the inner fellowship which is 'in the Lord.'

No Church is by nature and tradition so equipped on the side of its laymen to give to the world a new and arresting example of this inner meaning of Christian fellowship as is our own. The possibilities are unlimited. What, one is tempted to ask, would be the result if every layman in membership were to make it his aim for one year to go in deliberate quest of making friendships for Christ's sake, and quietly and prayerfully cultivating those friendships to this end? The laymen have a scope of service in these directions which is almost of necessity denied to the minister. They are already and always, through their business relationships, club acquaintances, committee responsibilities, 'in touch' with their non-church-going fellows. The minister is ever seeking to get this preliminary 'touch' in order that he may try to build on it. It is the birthright or business-right of the layman. It is his 'sphere of work.'

III. THE CHURCH AS THE SOCIETY FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

No definition of the Church, of course, is more than superficial that is not built up on the fact of the mystic and spiritual possibilities of human nature and their source in God. In the last analysis the Church is the mystic 'Body of Christ,' the fellowship of believers whose common aspiration is for the worship of God. To make that worship adequate to the nature of man and worthy of the glory of God, the Church cannot ignore the psychological development of the generation to which she would minister, and whose spiritual instincts she would awaken into the wonder and adoration of worship.

The war has probably deepened the instinct for God, while at the same time it may have crushed the desire for and made against the development of any sense of the need for God. This deepening of the spiritual instinct was already in process in pre-war days.

The cruel discipline of suffering gave tremendous urgency to this quest, and in the reaction from reason there were many signs that the pendulum had swung to the opposite extreme, where faith was in danger of becoming superstition. We had the credulity which accepted and discussed the story of 'The Angels at Mons,' and any observant onlooker at the front was not at a loss to discover similar signs of violent reaction from the rational as such. From an 'age of reason' we have swiftly moved into an 'age of faith'; and as yet we are hardly aware of the change. In an age of faith it is of first importance

that the worship of the Church should be reasonable and acceptable service unto God.

Every chaplain who has tested the usual forms of religious worship at the front will probably be conscious of the many ways in which they have been inadequate, unintelligent, and remote from the needs of those to whom he has ministered. The first plea is for reality in worship, sincerity in utterance, and catholicity in scope. Let any reader compare the reduplicated intercessions for Royalty in the Form of Morning Prayer with the utter lack of any reference to the great labouring classes and all the living and clamant problems associated with them. Why have we not set the example, we who are free to do so, of a sane and necessary revision by incorporating or creating, for instance, a 'Litany of Labour' similar to those very comprehensive forms by the Rev. F. W. Donaldson, of the Church Socialist League, or Dr. Orchard, of the King's Weigh House? Has not the time come when at the Communion Service, the central service of the Christian Church, we should repeat not merely the Decalogue, which is the Jewish code of morals and has nothing distinctively Christian in it, but the 'New Commandment' which our Lord insists is to be the norm and standard of true Christian conduct?

Closely akin to the question of the form of our services and the method of our approach to God is that of the manner of proclaiming the truth. Possibly we may be driven by the situation with which we are faced in these days of revolt from custom and convention, to make the distinction that was clearly

recognized in the early Church and has still to be made on the foreign field. The cleavage between Christian principles and ideals and the commonly accepted standards of the world is deepening. In consequence we no longer get, nor can we expect to get, the real 'outsider' to our services, his attendance at which implies to the average person a certain acceptance of belief and standard of conduct. He does not desire to join in our worship, and consequently gives us no opportunity of reaching him through the preaching or propagandist element of the normal service of worship.

May it not be that we shall in many cases benefit by no longer attempting the almost impossible task of uniting the two? Does not the attempt frequently result in the weakening of both, without any advantage to either? Our worship suffers through the attempt to popularize it in order to draw the people to listen to our propagandist offer of the gospel. Our propaganda equally suffers through the limitations of time and the implications of our worship. Why should the Church not try the experiment of making one service—say the evening service—fully and only a propagandist effort, with just enough singing and prayer as would supply the psychological atmosphere so necessary when one deals with the mental side of spiritual truth? The preacher would then have the necessary time to deal adequately with the fundamental questions of will, conscience, sex, or the problem of pain, whose foundations are seriously questioned at stages below those with which it is possible or even wise to deal in the normal half-hour's sermon.

A subsequent conference is almost a necessary part of such work, and would appear to be an absolute *sine qua non* if in this age we are to reach those who are most worth the saving. The writer tried a series of such services whilst on active service in the East. In place of the usual voluntary service on the Sunday night he arranged for six consecutive meetings at which answers to the questions sent in by the men themselves were to take the place of the usual twenty-minutes' address. The results were encouraging in the extreme. The attendance was quadrupled, the questions were such as showed that men were honestly perplexed, and would welcome help that would enable them to meet those contradictions that appeared to make faith in Christ a fiction, and they gave an interested attention for an hour instead of an indifferent hearing for twenty minutes. Above all, the 'atmosphere' was as spiritually alive as at any after-meeting.

Would not some such definitely marked 'objective' make it possible, on the one hand, to do more effective missionary work amongst those who do not and, it would appear, will not attend worship, and, on the other hand, leave us more free to deepen and enrich by a more effective spiritual concentration the worship that would be admittedly only or mainly for believers? Such a modification of our means of grace might enable us to give a larger place to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as the central act of our worship. It has been a common experience of our chaplains that on active service Holy Communion has come to its own as the most helpful and oft-desired means

of grace. Here has centred the richest spiritual fellowship and the deepest experience of grace. Nor has this been the result merely of a mechanical superstition that all will be well if you 'make your communion,' be your attitude to Christ what it may. It has rather been the outcome of a strong desire for that grace which is most fully realized in this memorial of the Passion.

'The Churches of the future are the Churches with a high threshold.' We surely need in the days ahead not to be afraid of a wise and Christian exclusiveness. The world will have little or no use for a Christianity that is not conceived and consecrated in a wise churchmanship. Men will not be attracted by an easy and ill-defined religion who have been through the exacting experiences of yesterday, nor will they deem us as truly and tragically in earnest until the divisions between Church and Church are broken down by a deeper unity of life and purpose. To a united Church they will give their respect, and possibly be found at last amongst those who through her 'are being saved.'

VI

THE IMMEDIATE DUTY OF THE CHURCHES

THE ATTRACTION OF JESUS.

It is a mistake to imagine that the soldier is indifferent to Christ or His message. He dislikes the modern interpretation of it, which is rather more Pauline than 'Christine.' The thinking soldier of to-day welcomes emphasis on Christ and His ideals, but is somewhat impatient of the Church's preference for Pauline and theological interpretations. The hardships and perils through which he has recently passed have tended to emphasize for him the value of the Christ message and Christ appeal. 'His touch has still its ancient power.' The 'Inasmuch' of the Gospels is the key-note of many deeds of valour and unacknowledged Christian service. The splendid fellowship of the trenches is but a modern expression of Christ's doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Sermon on the Mount has been richly and repeatedly interpreted in 'No Man's Land.' If the Churches wish to recover their attractiveness to the men and to place themselves in line with their highest aspirations, their emphasis, both

in message and example, must be on the real Jesus of the Gospels.

THE CALL FOR LEADERSHIP.

It is doubtful if the Church, as at present constituted, is adequate to reflecting the religious consciousness of the men. Her horizon is too narrow and circumscribed to influence men whose experiences have been so deep, so profound, and so far-reaching. The Church, instead of breasting the stream, has been content to lie up in a backwater. Men to-day ask for the authoritative voice of a prophet, but instead they hear the timid whispering of evasion regarding the problems and paramount issues of the times. The Church must boldly identify herself with the mighty movements of the day, remembering that the Kingdom of God is bound up inseparably with social and national interests. The Church is thought by the working classes to have been in the past too much identified with capitalism, and her ministers as sycophants waiting at the tables of the rich. All this must be altered, and any misapprehension on this score speedily removed. Offices should be as freely given to the poor as to the rich, and there is no reason why Methodist property should not, with discretion, be used for movements affecting the welfare of the Labour world.

The world to-day awaits the religious leader who can touch its very deep latent religious consciousness into life and expression, and give it freedom to organize a new type of Christianity that will glow with passion for the emancipation and redemption of humanity.

I. THE MINISTER'S PART.

Meanwhile much can be done to give the 'padre' larger scope for his ministry. The prophet of to-day is often merged in the clerk, and cumbered with routine and detail. The whole future of the success of organized Christianity in reference to the demobilized soldier depends upon the freedom of the minister. Undoubtedly he is the 'pivotal' man in the Church; and it cannot be too strongly urged that he should be given scope for the exercise of his ministry, free from unhelpful criticism, liberated from financial burdens and unnecessary routine, and allowed freedom in service, freedom in speech, freedom in method. These are the things for which especially the younger ministers of Methodism are longing.

THE MINISTER IN LAYMEN'S EYES.

The minister, to be the ideal leader of men, must be a 'man's man.' The laymen's criticism of many parsons, often offered most sympathetically by observers who have an unshaken faith in the institution of the Church, and who are desirous of efficient leadership in the ranks of the ministry, is that many are 'not men,' lack virility, and are not robust in soul; and because they are not 'men's men,' they are not women's either. They are not leaders either by force of personality or by virtue of experience, or even through their college training. In manners and speech they are not natural, they are 'ministerial'; and without a mistake you can pick them out from thousands. Their dress is obsolete and separatist; and whilst their sincerity is unquestioned, the best

that can be said of many of their efforts is that they are well meant and harmless.

THE MINISTER WHO ATTRACTS.

Where this estimate is correct, there must be an alteration if the Church and its ministers are to win the men. We want men who, like Christ, mixed freely with men, as much at home at the marriage-feast as in the temple ; as much at home in the mess or the football-field as in the pulpit. To do this it is not necessary for any minister to sacrifice his principles ; but he must be rid of all forms of artificiality, and no longer produce that atmosphere which makes the average man in the room he enters feel uncomfortable. Where the padre has succeeded on the field by his sociability, his broad-minded and large-hearted sympathy, circuit ministers can succeed at home.

ENGINEERS, NOT PHYSICIANS.

Although the Master likened Himself to a physician, there are aspects of a minister's life even more suggestive of the engineer. The engineer sees the power and the possibility in all phenomena ; the doctor sees the weakness and the failure of his patient. The doctor's work is to fight disease ; the engineer's work is to harness power to some useful purpose, and so prevent it running to waste. We have dwelt too much in the past on the frailty of the flesh. Men refuse to translate human nature in terms of 'original sin' and 'total depravity.' Wickedness is often misdirected and superfluous energy, and sometimes merely

the overplus of life. Take the same energies and apply them to a useful purpose, and you will solve many a social evil.

For example, drink in a mess or club, a bar or public-house, is very often sociability run wild, the cup of the covenant of friendship misapplied, a pitifully misdirected energy. The work of the minister is to turn this great force of vital friendship into better channels. Ask any engineer where lies the fascination of his work. Does it ever become monotonous? He will tell you that every situation presents its own difficulties; every bridge, for instance, requires its own peculiar adaptation of the book formulas. There are always so many different factors at play, so many strains and weights, so many differences in subsoils and currents, all affecting the situation. So, in the same way, there must be no stereotyped rule-of-thumb ministry and no attempt to standardize our institutions, but free adaptation of the whole of our church machinery to meet the special situation created by this war.

PLEA FOR ADAPTATION.

Our plea is for elasticity and freedom for the minister to adopt any method that appears wise to him to meet the situation. If he fails, he will at least have got the credit for having tried. If he chooses, for instance, to run a cinema service after his Sunday night service, and in this way to make his appeal to a large body of men who would not otherwise have been attracted to the means of grace, why not let him? Or why not, instead of the ordinary prayer-

meeting, which to a young man often appears dull and stereotyped, allow the minister to have a sing-song on Sunday nights, letting the audience choose their favourite hymns? And then with all heartiness you may be sure they will join in a few earnest prayers at the close.

THE OPEN-AIR TREATMENT.

Underlying the whole of these suggestions for the reception of the men is the principle that we must understand and use the natural tendencies which the life and freedom of those who for four years have lived in the open air have engendered. The open-air treatment must be applied not only to the men, but more particularly to the Churches themselves, as a preparation for the return of the men. Robustness, a frank, manly, courageous spirit, will always attract. No sophistry, soft-soap, or patronage, no shirking of the main issues, will be tolerated. Life is too serious for this, and since men have faced death they have learned the importance of grasping a few fundamental simple truths. They therefore require, in language which is straight to the point, a clear and earnest presentation of the gospel, and a straightforward endeavour on the part of the Church to meet their difficulties and problems.

THE SERMON OF THE FUTURE.

The War has not deprived the sermon of its place in the reverent attention of the men. A preacher who has something to say, and who is earnest and sincere, will never have a better audience; but a

sermon should not be more than twenty minutes to twenty-five minutes in length, trimmed of all superfluities, containing, generally speaking, only one dominant idea, well illustrated, without any of the hackneyed phrases and expressions that have long since lost their meaning or applicability. The truth should be presented from different aspects, but every phrase incisive, pertinent, and clear.

DEFINITE TEACHING.

Almost unanimously chaplains in talking with the men have formed the opinion that most of those who have retained their Christian life and influence in the trenches, and under the terribly difficult conditions of army life, are a product of the Sunday school rather than of the Church. The fact is that our sermons have lacked definite teaching on the fundamental groundwork of Christian evidences and truth. This has had a very sad consequence. The immature Christian soldier, badly trained, with only a haphazard knowledge of what he stands for as a Christian, has come in contact with the Blatchfordian critic, or the barrack-room lawyer, or the avowed sceptic, and has completely lost his feet. When asked to give a 'reason for the faith that is in him,' he has found how pitifully lacking he is in the understanding of the elements of Christianity. He had not been taught or trained, and we had sent him out into the rough and unsympathetic atmosphere of camp and billet lamentably equipped. So, after a feeble attempt to vindicate his position, he succumbed to popular opinion, and became a disappointment to himself

and a problem to those who sought his good. Not to give our young men definite training in Christian principles is a betrayal of our trust.

BRIGHT YET DIGNIFIED WORSHIP.

As a chaplain who has conducted services for the men on desert sands and in dirty billets, on shipboard and in Y.M.C.A. tents, the writer cannot too greatly emphasize the need for an attractive, beautiful, and dignified worship. Our chapel services, if they are permanently to attract and keep the men, need considerable alteration and improvement. It should be remembered we are dealing with men who for years past have enjoyed the 'open-air treatment.' The service in the Army has never been longer than one hour. If for 'auld lang syne's sake' the returning soldier attends a service an hour and a half long, I am quite certain in most cases he will confess at the end, unless the preacher be exceptional, that he was bored and wearied. The musical features of our services should be carefully studied. The men prefer hearty congregational singing, and will not gladly attend any place of worship where the choir is too much in evidence. The service as a whole should be true to the traditional Methodist type, with a hearty ring and an absence of undue formality, provided at the same time there is strict reverence and sincerity.

II. THE CHURCH'S PART.

The division employed in this chapter between the responsibilities of the minister and those of the

Church itself is not intended to be an arbitrary one. The minister and the Church will doubtless co-operate in all the changes and enterprises of the future, but what follows may be regarded as perhaps the special obligation of the Church itself, under the direction and leadership of the minister. A Welcome-home Committee, composed of ardent, cheery, sympathetic men and women, should be formed in every church throughout the land to assist the minister, and represent the church in helping forward the resettlement of the men.

CHURCH UNITY.

Every Methodist chaplain returning from the front would agree that it has been one of the most difficult and perplexing problems of his work that Methodist Churches have not been united in worship or in chaplaincy work during the war, but have been under different control. Needless to say, the men are even more perplexed and annoyed by the division of Churches which should be united in common worship. This is true of the whole body of Christians; it is still more true of Methodism. These subtle distinctions distress and annoy the Methodist soldier. One of the methods which would undoubtedly attract the Methodist lad returning from the war would be a great broad-souled, spirited campaign to bring together into one Church the different branches of Methodism in these islands. If a scheme could be launched to-morrow to pool all resources, pay all trust debts, and equalize all salaries, there would be no difficulty in financing it.

This, too, would be a preparation for the still larger unity for which we are as Christians earnestly looking, and the man from the trenches would support heart and soul any movement for the coming together of the various members of the Body of Christ. One very valuable by-product of this union would be that in almost every village in the land one building would be liberated as an institute for social work ; and no one can do the evangelical and social work that requires to be done in the villages of England so well as a band of united and zealous Methodist people.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE TRENCHES.

The great note of the trenches is fellowship and brotherhood. We witnessed for years a brotherhood broad-based upon the simple claims of humanity, utterly regardless of caste or social distinction, sacrificial in its aim, and deeper and broader than any creed or social system. The French word *camaraderie*—band of comrades—expresses it best. This ideal is too precious to be lost as we return to the somewhat commonplace days of civil life, and walk the same streets we used to do before the momentous events of 1914. If we are to capture the men for the Churches, this spirit must prevail. Treat the man as a 'pal.' Apply this spirit to our labour disputes, let it reign in our great Trade Unions, and you will find that men who have been flung together in danger and death will refuse to be separated in life. The Church must encourage in every way the spirit of brotherhood. It will save industrial England from shipwreck.

THE SOCIAL CLUB.

It would not be sufficient merely to hold a 'social' in the schoolroom as a part of the welcome given to the man; but a Social Club or Institute, where the ex-soldier will be able to spend his evenings after work, play a game with his pals who were with him in France or Flanders, or with any sympathetic member of the Church, should be founded and permanently attached to every chapel. The management might safely be left to a few ex-service men, assisted by the ladies of the church. These club-rooms should be warm, comfortable, and well lit; and the cost of doing this will be repaid a thousandfold by the gratitude of men who endured for us such physical discomfort in the trenches. In places where accommodation is difficult to provide, a camp home or an ex-army hut might be purchased and refitted.

THE CHURCH AND THE Y.M.C.A.

When demobilization is completed, many of us look for the close co-operation between the Churches and the Y.M.C.A. that we have known in France and other parts of the world, resulting in the division of responsibility between them, so that the church plant will be for the specific religious work of the Church on Sundays and weekdays, whilst the Y.M.C.A. plant in the same community will be the social centre. A scheme is now in process of formation whereby the ordinary Y.M.C.A. hut from the home camp, or the French village, can be transferred and made as permanent as possible in every local town or group of villages over the whole countryside. This scheme

would include a women's club with comfortable appurtenances, a room for billiards, a gymnasium for the boys, a committee-room where the sports of the community could be arranged; but the main centre would be a large concert hall, fitted with platform and cinema. This corresponds, with slight alteration, to the Y.M.C.A., with which the men are familiar, and would be greatly welcomed by them.

A BOON TO VILLAGE LIFE.

The success of such a club, of course, implies the utmost sympathy and co-operation between ministers and Churches and Y.M.C.A. leaders. It implies also a league of all the Churches, Protestant at least, and the Y.M.C.A. in joint work for the community, the absolute cessation of all rivalry between the various religious denominations, and a wide enough outlook on life to regard the Y.M.C.A., with all its activities, as an integral part of the work of the Church. Religion must be conceived in as large terms as life itself—as broad as our fourfold nature, intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social; as deep as our need; as high as our aspirations.

DEFINITE WORK FOR THE MEN.

The returning man must be encouraged to take up some active Christian work; we must use him, or we shall lose him. If necessary, some work should be made for him. Why not start a Boy Scout or Boys' Brigade movement, and select the ex-soldier as leader? There is abundant scope for service in the church, guild, Sunday school, or choir; and no

man should be a pluralist in the matter of offices, or be allowed to settle down for life in any particular stewardship. New blood is needed in the Churches, and the men who have ventured all in the world's greatest crusade will prove valuable indeed.

THE CHURCH AND SPORT.

The question of athletics and its relationship to Church life forms a very important part in the attraction and retention of the ex-service man. If the minister and his congregation can take a reasonable interest in healthy recreation and in social and athletic life, it will be all to the good. First, because the young man is at that stage of life when he demands some form of recreation to give expression to physical energies ; and if he fails to get it under the patronage of the Church, he will get it in other and worse environments. Secondly, why in the name of all reason should not religion cover the whole of life? We have far too long been led to believe that these things were ' of the devil.' As a mere instance, why should the bowling-green be necessarily ' of the public-house ' and not ' of the Church ' ? It is a splendidly healthy means of open-air recreation. Let us take it out of the hands of the publican, and give the bowlers not only a green to play upon; but a room with facilities for holding executive meetings and arranging matches.

Our position as Churches in relation to sport should be honest and logical. Seeing that all forms of recreation are at the same time equally open to good use and abuse, it is hard to justify the prejudice felt against certain types of recreation. It is surely a

case of there being a distinction without a difference. If sport and recreation are wrong, let us say so, and act up to our convictions ; if they are right, then let us act on that principle.

THE CHURCH AND CIVIC LIFE.

In addition to this the minister might well get a good men's gathering, brotherhood, or debating club together, where the spirit of friendliness and mutual helpfulness prevails, and where the men can talk freely on all subjects. Why should not the Churches array themselves under the modern prophet in a crusade to reconstruct their little bit of local England on lines of national righteousness? The civic and municipal life of the day calls for a modern Savonarola. So often second-rate men with second-rate ideals and selfish and sectional aims have taken to themselves the government of our towns and cities. The fault largely lies in the aloofness of the Church from civic life.

PRACTICAL HELP.

There is one important way in which the church members who are employers can help the returning men. The army life has made it difficult for men to settle down to the warehouse, mill, or office-stool. For some time they will be restless and discontented. Some will carry the marks of the war with them to their grave, and many will find it very difficult to adjust themselves to new employment, or in the case of partially disabled men to light work. They will doubtless strive to disguise as much as possible their

disability, and it will be the privilege and joy of many men of business, who have been saved from utter disaster by these brave fellows, to find employment for them, bearing with them in their restlessness, their wounds and weakness.

SYMPATHY BASED ON KNOWLEDGE.

The primary need of the Churches is, after all, to get to know the man, to study sympathetically his point of view, to try to understand his environment, his limitations, his aspirations—in short, his character, and to see wherein it has developed since 1914. It is only by a real sympathetic understanding of the man himself that you can do anything with him. Any welcome that falls short of understanding the man's true needs and nature will fall short of a true welcome.

WHAT THE SOLDIER CAN TEACH US.

In some senses the Churches must be prepared to sit at the feet of the returning soldier and learn of him. On the Via Dolorosa that he has trod since August, 1914, from Gethsemane to the lonely cross, they must follow him, for he has shown the world as well as his own Church how near he is to the spirit of the Crucified. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And the man who has deliberately risked his life, and gone into danger to help a comrade in the consecrated freemasonry of the trenches and the battlefield, has earned his right to be considered. He is in truth the saviour of his country.

THE CHURCH'S OPPORTUNITY.

The wounded are still lying out in the No Man's Land of the social life of the England of to-day; and if the Church will 'go over the top' with the men to rescue the perishing, she will not only discover her true mission, but win them for ever. In captivity the Germans acknowledged that when other nationalities grew hopeless and careless, the British soldier kept his buttons clean. He shared his parcels with others less fortunate than himself; he cared for the 'least of these my brethren.' In these and many other ways modern church life must learn of him, for in understanding and helping him it will solve the problem that confronts Christianity.

At the same time, it is true the men themselves will often disappoint. They present tremendous difficulties to the church worker. They are the challenge, the appeal, and almost the despair of modern Christianity; but there is one unfailing point of contact. They all appreciate bold leadership; a weak leader they despise. The man who wants to win the ex-soldier must be an out-and-out sportsman, must be prepared to risk anything and do anything for his brother man. Religion must be presented not as personal salvation alone, not as subjective but objective, expressing itself in sacrificial activity for social well-being. The Church must embody the attitude of Jesus to the outcast, the waster, the poor and uneducated; must convey His love, His patience, His faith, hope, and forgiveness, His sacrificial spirit, and His welcome home to the great mass of men outside the fold. It must interpret the Divine Father to the human family.

VII

LAG OR LEAD?

THE COMMUNAL OUTLOOK.

What can the *individual* do to enable the Church to face the situation of the altered world, and in particular to meet and help and make use of the returning soldier? The war has brought us up against the elemental truths of life and death. We have seen passion and restraint, self-seeking and self-sacrifice, revealed undisguised as we never saw them before. The whole world is convinced that nothing short of a new creation will do. A man knows now that he cannot save himself alone. Herein lies the duty of churchmanship. The individual Christian must consider himself a member of an organized community, which now is faced with the alternative of lagging still farther behind the world, or leading it to its God-appointed goal, the Kingdom of God.

The Christian man of the twentieth century, as distinguished from the Christian man of the nineteenth, may be said to have a communal outlook, whereas the outlook of the latter was private. The duty of the individual, therefore, is twofold: first, to set himself in right relation with the Unseen; and, secondly, to see himself in relation to the whole

community. We are persuaded that the religion of Jesus Christ is to be the creative force of the new social order. The spirit of Christ lifts a man out of himself, and energizes him to live a wider life according to his knowledge and opportunity. Beginning here, a man's prejudices are melted in proportion as his submission to the Christ-Spirit is entire. And a Church made up of such individuals is the dynamic for the new world that is coming.

THE ORGANIC WILL.

Life in the Army has made men familiar with the idea of a 'chain of authority.' The private soldier has learnt in action that his personal safety depends on discipline, let alone the success of the undertaking. He accepts the authority of the merest lance-corporal. The corporal is responsible to his sergeant, the sergeant to the platoon-commander, this second-lieutenant to the captain of his company, and he in turn to the lieutenant-colonel commanding the battalion; the battalion commander is responsible to the brigadier, and he to the divisional general. The chain continues upward through corps, army, and commander-in-chief, to the War Office. The War Office is responsible to the Cabinet, the Cabinet to Parliament, and Parliament to the nation. And is the nation the final authority? Germany's teachers said so. But the Allies have been at war to vindicate a higher law than national. The nation is responsible to humanity, and humanity is responsible to God.

The Army has taught men the effectiveness of an organic will. Whilst our men are casting aside the

galling chains of military discipline, none the less the idea that human life could be organized for peace as it has been organized for war will remain indelible in their minds.

In response to this impression, there is being offered to men to-day a mere materialistic organization of industry, in which the individual is reckoned on as if he were a chemical or physical molecule, attracted or repelled only by the force of self-interest.

HOW IT CAN BE EMBODIED.

May it not be our glorious privilege to supply a spiritual foundation for the coming unification of our social structure? For what authority can hold sway any longer but an internal and spiritual authority? And what loyalty is able any longer to hold society together but a loyalty to the spirit of the community? And that spirit, we say, is Christ, our invisible King.

Now let us illustrate what we mean when we say that the immediate duty of the individual Christian is to see himself in relation to the whole community of human life. It was said in the days of old-fashioned piety, 'Give a tithe of your income to God.' By no such rule of thumb can the Christian's financial obligations be settled to-day.

Supposing I am (a) an employer of labour. There is more Christianity in paying generous wages than in being munificent out of large profits. Yet what I could give my employees above the average rate of wages would actually be a very slight increase without myself having to close down and go out of business. It has been recently stated that if the

whole vast war profits of this country had been expended in increased wages, it would have meant only a paltry rise of four shillings per head per week during the war period. I can go but a very little way in this direction without so increasing the cost of my wares as to lose my market. As a capitalist I am bound to consider myself as a steward not merely of my profits, but as a steward of human life. In this age the time is coming when in this industry and that it will be said, 'Thou mayest be no longer steward.' But may we not look to some master-minds of industry, as to men who have bowed in allegiance to Christ and humanity, to be free from the least tinge of self-seeking, and to guide and guard the State from many pitfalls where it thinks fit to assume the more direct control of industry?

Supposing I am (*b*) an employee and trade unionist. I cannot be expected to be ignorant of the privileges that have been gained by my fellows by battles fought against tyranny. But I am bound to hope and think my way toward life in a greater unity that will have risen above the cleavage of classes. I shall no longer think sectionally. I shall remember the community of which my craft is but a limb; and this thought must temper my future battles.

But if the struggle between the wage-earners and profit-takers is to be suspended for the sake of the community, then the community itself must receive such loyalty as can only be rendered it when it comes to be regarded as a body expressing a divine spirit, or, to speak in New Testament language, a bride adorned for her husband, Christ. There are those

who will regard such language as impracticable idealism. But unless Christianity itself is impracticable idealism, this is its task.

Men are waiting to believe in Christianity, if its professors only give the lead. If there is any spiritual force available, such as once performed the miracles we have professed to believe, let us claim it and proclaim it.

CHRISTIAN COMRADESHIP.

‘Seeing ourselves in relation to the whole.’ Let us apply this next to our church organization. There are tides in the affairs of men which must be resisted, breasted by every swimmer who would not be swept away. But the tide which in our age is setting towards unity is surely not such, but is a current from the heavenly ocean upon which the Christian conscience may rejoice to set full sail. Shall there be accomplished the unity of nations in a league of peace and industrial unification for the betterment of human life—shall these things be accomplished, we say, before the professed followers of Christ attain at least to some kind of federation, if not fuller unity? On this flood-tide, we ask, shall we lag or lead?

Has Methodism a special part to play in the bringing about of Christian union? What are we thought of by others? We did not care what they thought in the past, and thought it wrong to care. When Carlyle called Methodism ‘egotism stretched out to the infinite,’ our grandfathers might have made him credit us, on his own showing, with having kept men’s souls alive in the age of the triumph of machines over

men. When Mr. Bernard Shaw expressed his view that Methodism was a very good religion for getting rich on dishonesty, no one even sent him Fletcher's *Checks*, much less threatened him with libel. Wesley himself was far more particular than we have been to circularize society as to what he was out to do.

We tended more and more to belong to a certain sort of people. Then the war broke out, and large numbers of our ministers were attached as chaplains to units of our fighting men. Chaplains have been a good deal criticized, and there have been some failures. But in the rough-and-tumble campaign life, where men sought for essential religion without any paraphernalia, we found our opportunity, and, for the most part, took it. 'We all know what you stand for—Christianity without the red tape,' said an old battalion-commander to me recently.

One night, when our men had come out of the front-line posts on the Somme into support, I got in a service in a 'bow-hut,' at the close of which a man waited to speak to me. 'I had a near go last night. A big shell came and buried me in the hole, where I had to stay. My mate dug me out. I've been thinking ever since what a rotten life I've led. Please, sir, how much does it cost to get confirmed?' We clinched the matter of the new start there and then, and I duly passed his name on to his parents' denomination for the rest. Not that we were ashamed of our name; all Wesleyan chaplains that I met were proud of it. But we were at one in this, that in dealing with men who faced death daily sectarian denomination was an impertinence.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

At the same time, I want to record what I believe all other Wesleyan chaplains feel, viz. a distinct aversion to 'undenominationalism.' We are catholic. We abhor a nondescript Christianity, the fruit of a private interpretation. We believe in 'the Church,' its universality and its apostolicity. 'Why, you're a Churchman!' said a High Anglican colleague who shared a roofless cellar with me for a week near St. Quentin. The only difference of any moment was that to him the apostolic succession is through outward tokens; with us, through personal and spiritual influence alone.

But the common-sense, pragmatic Englishman, even though he be a layman of the Established Church, will judge the ministry by its grace and power. With a view to Christian reunion, therefore, let us see ourselves continually in relation to the whole professing Christian world. Let us maintain and avow our catholicity; and upon this point of difference, viz. whether the 'succession' is mechanical or spiritual, let us commend our position to the common sense of mankind.

Certainly the ingenious devices of compromise which have been suggested for bringing the Methodist ministry into the outward succession might prove useful if we were winding up business. If this impulse toward unification is the logic of decreasing vitality, then such compromise might be a wise policy—if, indeed, a decaying religion were worth the trouble of underpinning.

But the only unity worth striving for is that which

will be borne upon a rejuvenescence of the old-time religion. And this is not likely to be brought about by the old stock, but by the manhood yet to be won.

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY.

The next point for insistence on as an individual duty is intellectual honesty. There is nothing that men are more interested in than religion. Give them the chance of baiting you on it, and they will do so, not for the fun of 'ragging' a parson, but from the sheer desire to understand.

Surely the lack of confidence in the professing minister of religion is largely due to the fact that he has not given the opportunity for open questioning, even if he was prepared to make reply. All sorts of half-baked views of life are scoring just now because they seem to explain things which we have shirked explaining. This time last year a zealous propagation of the Anglo-Israelite idea was causing some of my men to investigate the Old Testament with a real interest. Were the British really the Chosen People? Within a thousand yards of St. Quentin, right up to the eve of the German deluge of March 21, I was carrying on lively conversations with groups of men in posts and dugouts on this very question. They had made me read Scripture passages 'for,' and I had left them lists of passages in reply 'against.' Their turn for rejoinder never came. But during the awful ten days that followed, a man who had the real hang of the matter remarked to me, 'It's a terrible thing to see the armies of the living God in retreat!'

That is worth putting beside 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'

Some advocates of orthodoxy have rendered free discussion and open conversation very difficult. The 'Tommy' or 'ex-Tommy' is not going to be rushed into the whole creed all at once. He will take it piecemeal ; but each article as he says it will have the ring of a deep sincerity and a clear understanding.

In my experience men find no difficulty at all in recognizing the inspiration of the Scriptures when they hear them put forward from the point of view known as the historically critical. They recognize that God speaks through experience, i.e. through the history of men and nations.

Again, the scientific views of the universe and creation, which in the past have been so perversely represented as anti-Christian, must be set forth by apologists who know their business, as simply enhancing the splendour of Christ's message that the purpose of God in creation is now to be carried forward to its completion.

A NEW WORLD.

Those men who have looked death in the face so often throughout this war can never be just as they were. Deep within are memories of experiences when the soul leapt up to God ; of comradeship stronger than death ; of loyalty to the uttermost, which, indeed, is a good word with which to replace the hackneyed word 'faith' until faith recovers its virility, by which alone men are saved. To these elements, if we make

appeal, we shall not appeal in vain. The Christian Church must no longer lag, but lead.

Real Christianity is a revolutionary thing in human life. The anti-Churchman will often throw this at us. The men who are returning from army life have had their times in which they have heard the spirit beating its wings within the chrysalis. They expect great things of us as Christians. They expect us to give a lead. They expect us as Christians to criticize the unchristian foundations of society until they totter. They expect us to proclaim and support the brotherly, fair, and equal principles which must obtain if we believe that the heart of the universe is love.

If the God we preach is too cold, if the salvation we proclaim does not embrace all human life on earth and in heaven, if the task we set is too small, they will turn from us contemptuously, as from men who do not know their job. They will have no mere embroidery of life for a religion. But if we offer them the Christianity of Christ for the transfiguration of the earth and all that is in it, will they not accept it and Him? And our human life shall arise from the dust.

CONCLUSION

A DISTINGUISHED officer of the Guards, appealing to brother officers for definite surrender and loyal service to Jesus Christ, drew a distinction between religion and Christianity. He said that his experience proved that the majority of soldiers had no place for religion in their programme of life, because religion so frequently meant to them a profession which was unattended by conspicuous happiness and unmarked by the practice of higher ethical standards, but was apparently merely a round of duties more or less perfunctorily performed—in fact, a form of godliness without the power. It is Christianity, he said, which can satisfy the deepest religious cravings of the human heart, and ‘Christianity in practice’ which will appeal to those who have no deep religious convictions, or who are, if they have any interest at all in religion, prejudiced against it. Christianity as a living, vital force, not as a dead and powerless creed, is the only form of religion which will satisfy the individual soul and make itself felt in the world.

In pre-war days there were, in almost every unit, a number of men who professed and called themselves Christians, conspicuous for their exultant and triumphant faith. The moral tone of the entire Army

was high. Temperance and purity work, consistently carried on for many years, had not been in vain. The 'Old Contemptibles' were in the succession of Havelock's Saints and Cromwell's Ironsides. But the majority of the men made no open profession of religion. Those who did were marked men. The soldier lives, moves, and has his being in public. There is no such thing as privacy; the intimacies of life are common property. The profession of religion, divorced from practice, would have earned the merited contempt of comrades. The one thing demanded of every Christian professor was reality. He was expected to kneel in prayer at his cot-side, to be zealous in the performance of his daily duties, to be above reproach in character—in a word, to be a true follower of his Master. Consequently the type of Christianity was distinctly high, and the Christian soldier was held in high esteem.

It is possible, in broad outline, to draw a picture of the Christian soldier serving in the ranks of the old Army. You met him in garrison or on active service, at home or abroad, in India or South Africa; he might belong to the cavalry, artillery, or the infantry; but he was one of a conspicuous band of men in uniform, urged by the same motive, holding the same faith, and marked by the same characteristics. First and foremost he was a confessor; the first article of his faith was, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Morning and night, in the barrack-room, he must kneel down before his comrades; this open

confession was the sign and symbol of his faith and loyalty to his Commander. Then he believed and daily proved the reality of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and Friend. His life was lived in communion with his Lord, in the sunshine of His presence. His comings and goings were ordered by this relationship. His work was done, his life was lived, in this fellowship. He had found a Friend, intimate and helpful, and nothing must be allowed to hide the face of such a Friend from his eyes. He was a devoted student of the Bible, often, literally, a man of one book. He ever carried his 'brick' with him. He turned to its pages in every need and emergency of life, and knew that its riches would never fail him. 'It is written' was quite sufficient for him. The Bible was not a book like any other book. Its words were living words; the voice was the voice of his King. He was a man of prayer; he was ever seeking, when duty allowed, the quiet of the 'Prayer' or 'Quiet' room, that there he might commune with his Lord. There was nothing formal about his prayer; he was talking to his best Friend, assured that he was speaking into hearing ears, and to a heart that would respond. He felt the need of Christian fellowship; a regular meeting with like-minded comrades every evening for Bible study, prayer, and testimony was not enough. He would meet his Christian brethren at the noonday hour. He was a witness-bearer, because he had something to tell—answered prayer, a new experience of God's grace and love, new light on some subject in Holy Writ. He was a soul-winner, ever seeking to save. He could commend

his Saviour to his comrades, for he was daily proving the value of His grace and strength. His cup of happiness was filled to overflowing when he was used to bring a new recruit into the army of his great Commander.

Soldiers of this type were to be found in the New Armies. They brought with them from civil life a happy Christian experience and high ideals of Christian service. They found at once that if the fires which burned within them were not to be damped down, or die out, they must boldly avow their Christian faith. Wherever they served, in training camps at home or in the far-flung battle line, they gathered around them comrades of like mind. They were leaders of men, inspiring confidence, helping the weak, raising the fallen. Frequently such men were called upon by commanding officers, in the absence of chaplains, to conduct parade services. They were looked upon by their comrades as a kind of 'unofficial' chaplain; they were approached in times of difficulty, and sent for in days of sickness. In more than one prison camp in Germany these men performed all the functions of a chaplain, and in one instance a request was preferred, by the man's comrades, to church authority that their leader might have permission granted him, under the special circumstances, to administer the Holy Communion. The majority of men who thus became spiritual leaders had been, before leaving their home churches, local preachers, Sunday-school teachers, and Guild workers.

Religion of this type is arresting. The experiences of war, which have been shared by something like

11,000,000 of the men of Greater Britain, have caused many who never thought before to think about the problems of God, the human soul, life, death, and the great hereafter. So far as one has been able to ascertain, the vast majority of these men were not in the slightest degree concerned about ecclesiastical, theological, and biblical problems. The difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee matters not to them. The questions involved may be of interest to theological professors and parsons, but they have no ascertained and intimate connexion with the great problems of life, nor do they aid in their solution.

These men have been face to face with moral temptations unknown, undreamt of, before the cause of honour led them to give and do their best for their country, and, if needs be, lay down their lives upon its altar. In the hour and power of pressing temptations they have found that the bulwarks which society, convention, family life, and the married state have raised against sin are powerless. Empty religious profession has been equally vain. They want something which will help them, something which will never fail them, some thing, some one, stronger than themselves and mightier than the adversary. When they have found a comrade as human as themselves, and as fiercely assailed, keeping his soul and body clean, the testimony that 'Jesus saves' has been more arresting and convincing than anything else in life's experience.

'He has something worth having.' Nothing will more attract the thoughts and desires of men toward Christianity than to see it working itself out in human life. 'Lazarus raised from the dead' appeals to the

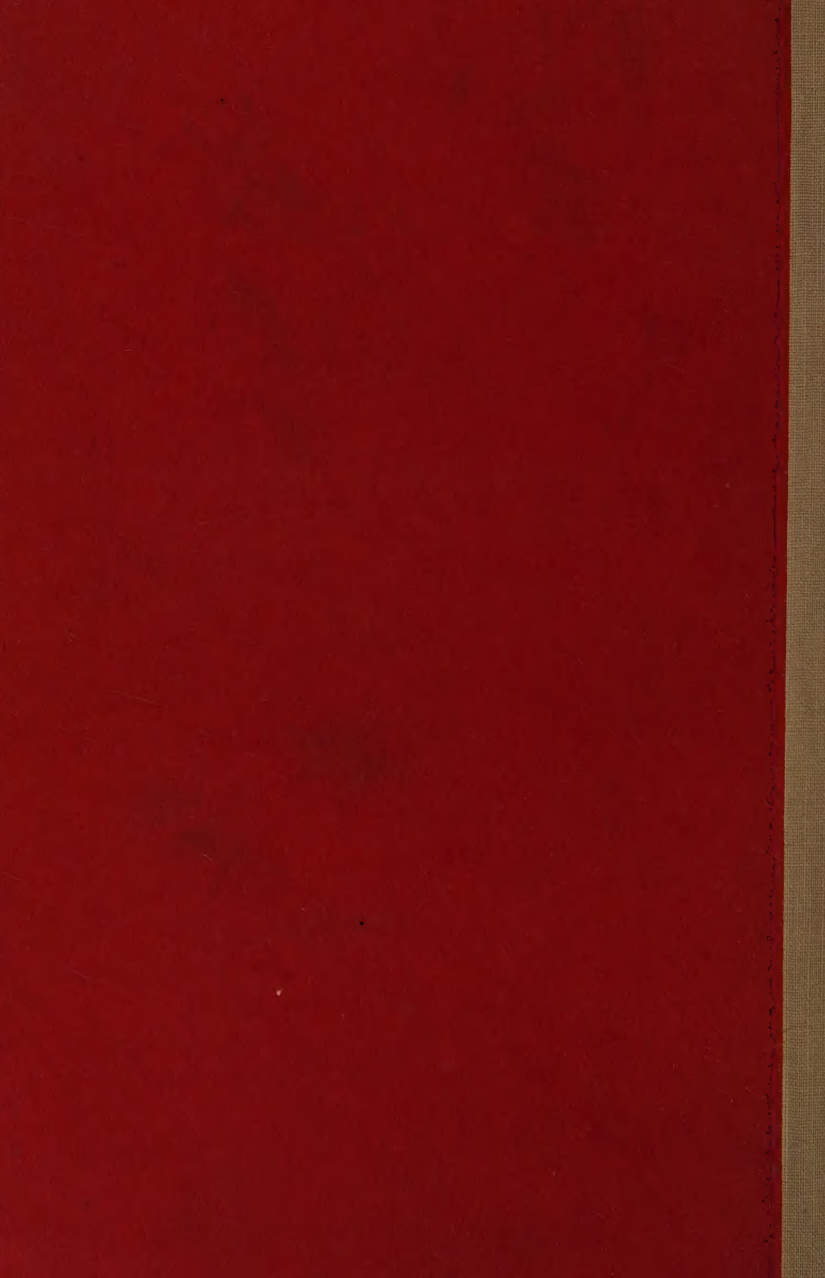
multitude. The man who has returned from the war is the man who went to the war, willing that his tunic should be stained with his life's blood, to whom God has given life. The experiences of war have undoubtedly changed him in many respects. The sham, the selfishness, the superficiality, is appraised at its true value. The straight, the true, the ideal, and, above all, the good, is approved and revered. If the religion offered to the ex-soldier is cold, formal, powerless, and passionless, his contempt for it will be provoked. If, on the other hand, it is real, manifesting itself in unblemished character, unselfishness, moral heroism, and obvious satisfaction and happiness, it will command his respect, and incline his heart to its acceptance. Christianity in earnest—the religion of Jesus—makes an appeal to thoughtful men that cannot be in vain, and to no men more than those who have passed through the fiery furnace of war.

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